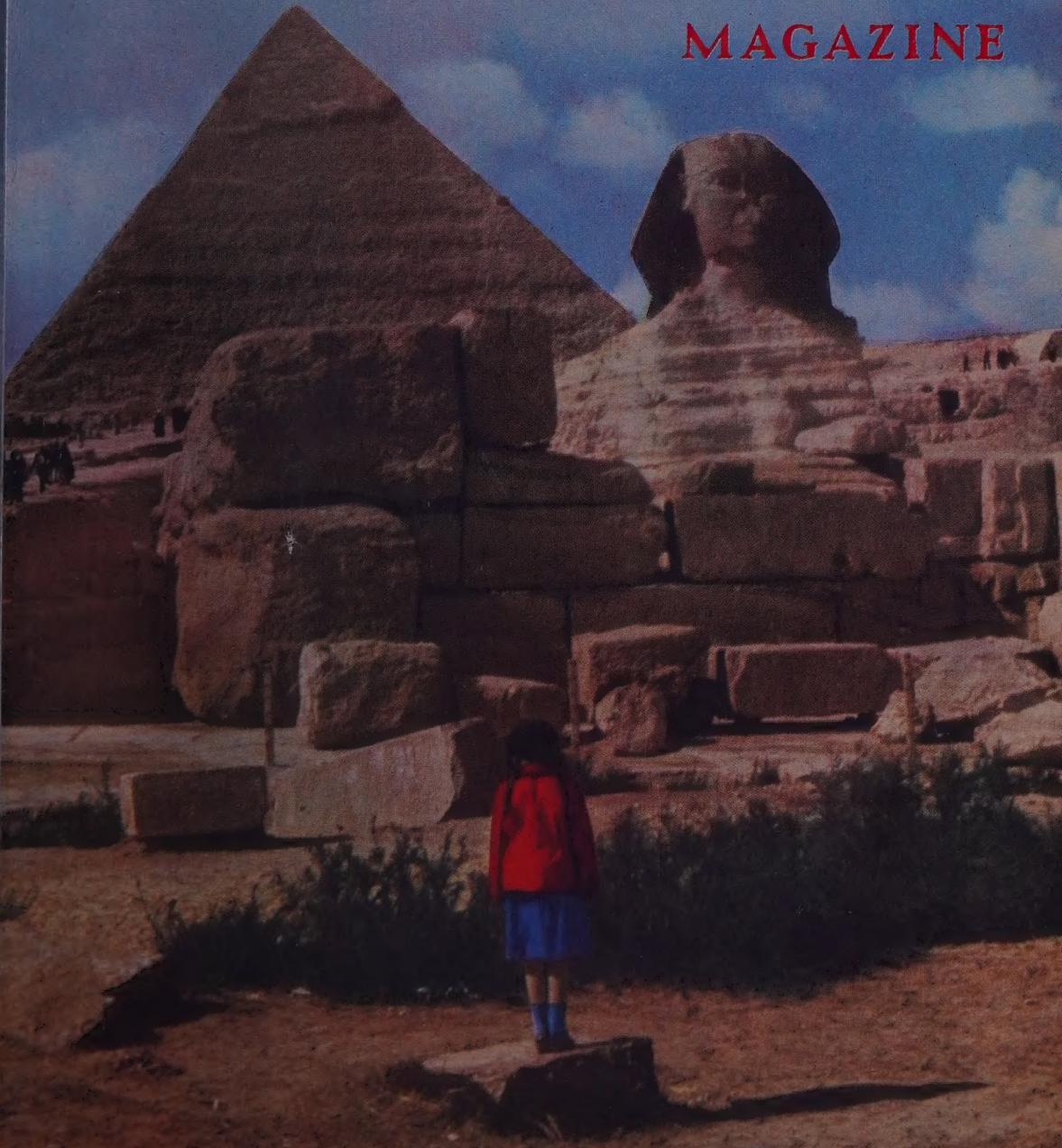


The

NOVEMBER 1956 2/6

GEOGRAPHICAL

MAGAZINE



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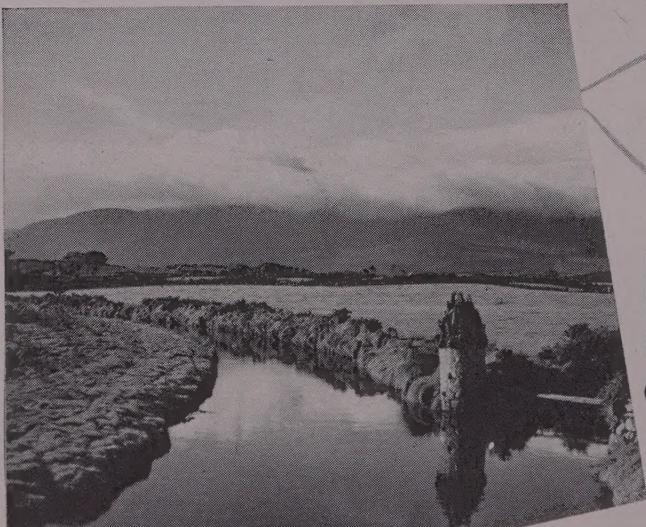
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Melbourne: Olympic City

by SIR THOMAS WHITE, K.B.E., D.F.C.

World-wide interest will be focussed this month on the city where the Olympic Games are being held. Soldier, airman, for over twenty years a Member of the Federal House of Representatives, Australian High Commissioner in London from 1951 to 1956, the author of the following article has one special qualification for writing it and for singing Melbourne's praises: he was born there

The choice of Melbourne as the site of the Sixteenth Olympiad, the Olympic Games of 1956, has directed unusual attention to this pleasant Australian city; capital of Victoria, the second smallest but most densely populated of the six States of Australia.

With a population of some one-and-a-half millions and second city to Sydney (founded in 1788), Melbourne's history dates only from 1835, when John Batman, a sheep-farmer of Van Dieman's Land, now Tasmania, formed a syndicate in Launceston to seek new pastures in the southern portion of New South Wales known until 1850 as Port Phillip.

The broad waters of Port Phillip Bay, at the head of which Melbourne stands, had been explored in 1802 by the navigator Matthew Flinders who named Australia, having been discovered only a few months earlier by Lieutenant Grant, R.N., in the brig *Lady Nelson*.

In 1803 an attempt to form a penal settlement had been made on the southern shores of the bay, but Colonel Collins in command of the two ships of the expedition, through apparent lack of enterprise, decided that the district was inhospitable and water scarce, so set sail for Van Dieman's Land, where he founded Hobart. "Thus", writes an early historian, "we may almost be inclined to believe that a special decree of All-wise Providence had gone forth, that a colony so fair and fertile should not be degraded by a convict origin."

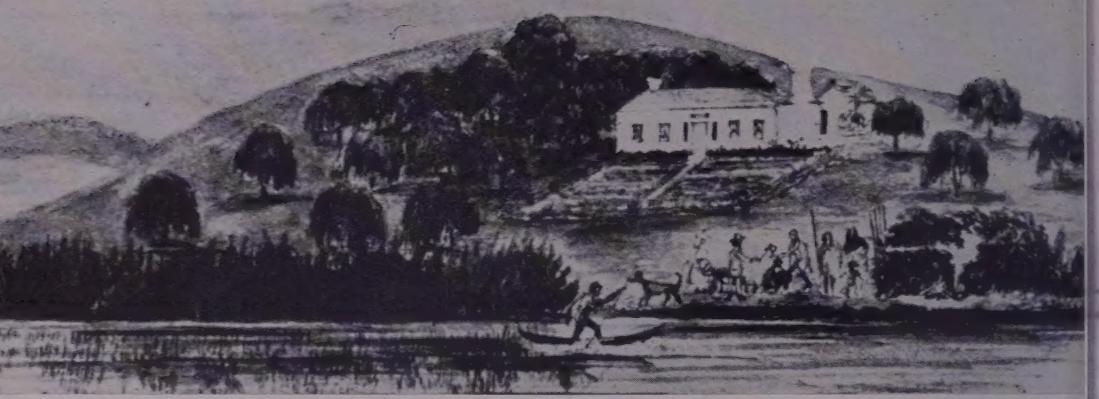
The region of Port Phillip had been crossed from New South Wales in 1824 by Hume and Hovell who reached the shores of Port Phillip Bay. In 1836 Major Mitchell, the Surveyor-General of New South Wales, reached the western Victorian coast where Portland now stands; he found to his astonishment that the Henty brothers, who originated from Arundel in Sussex, had been

settled there for two years from Van Dieman's Land, and already had considerable farming and whaling developments.

The Surveyor-General's glowing reports of the fertile country he had traversed, which he called Australia Felix, excited much interest in Sydney and in Britain, and led to some early settlement of the Port Phillip region. But it was the early enterprise of Batman and those who followed him, and the subsequent gold discoveries that promoted the rapid advance of Melbourne, which for forty years then became Australia's most populous city.

Son of a Sydney pioneer settler, Batman had gone to Tasmania to farm at the age of twenty-one. Of powerful build and a good bushman, he hunted bushrangers both for adventure and as a public duty, and single-handed had captured the notorious bushranger Brady who had terrorized the northern Tasmanian countryside. For this he was given a liberal grant of land; and being then well and happily established, devoted himself to the welfare and pacification of the unfortunate Tasmanian aborigines, then involved in bitter conflict with the white settlers. Largely through his efforts the remnants of this now extinct native race were induced to settle on the islands of Bass Strait. Scorning the routine



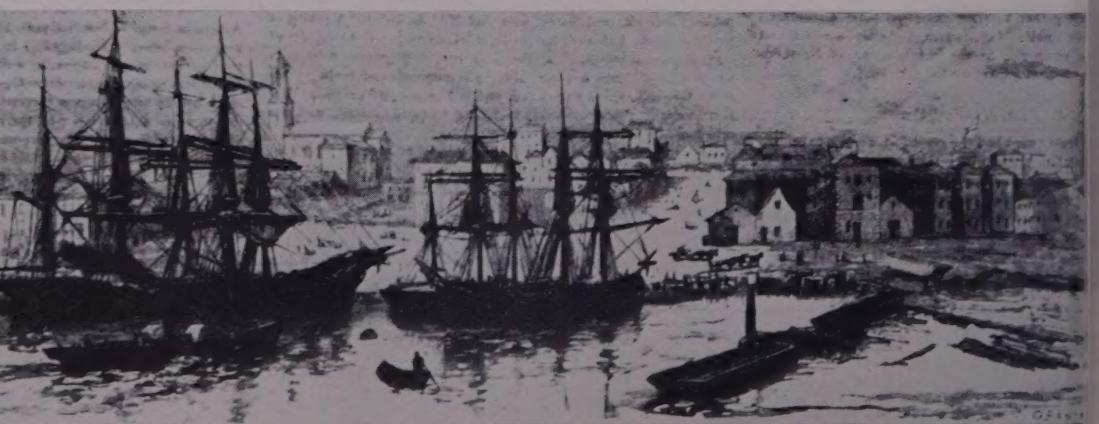


tions, except three, from the author

(Above) The house built in 1836 by John Batman, the founder of Melbourne, on the banks of the Yarra River where Melbourne now stands. On landing there he wrote: "This will be the place for a village"



(Above) Looking across the Yarra River: a view of Melbourne in 1838 before gold was discovered in the colony. (Below) The changed view in 1855, after the discovery of gold had made Melbourne a boom-town





The Ballarat goldfields in 1855. Victoria became a separate colony in 1851; gold, discovered in that year, brought a flood of immigrants to Melbourne, whose population then numbered only 23,000.

of farm life, he and Gellibrand proposed to the Governor of New South Wales as early as 1827 to form a well-stocked settlement at Port Phillip. Receiving no encouragement, he sailed with seven Sydney aborigines, who had worked on his farm in Tasmania, and three white adherents, in the thirty-ton schooner *Rebecca*, into Port Phillip Bay. Finding favourable country "richly grassed: so delightful to the eyes of the sheep farmer", he explored to the north of the Bay and, crossing a fine river, he wrote in his diary: "This will be the place for a village." The place where he landed from the ship's boat on the Yarra ("ever-flowing") River is the site of the present Customs House in the heart of Melbourne.

Making contact with the eight local aboriginal chiefs, Batman drew up a deed of agreement with them for the purchase of 600,000 acres of land for gifts of blankets, flour and an annual rent payment; then, leaving his three white companions and five aborigines in occupation nearer Port Phillip Heads, he returned to Tasmania to establish his claim.

The deed of conveyance was disallowed by the Governor of New South Wales to whom the Colonial Office had referred it; and Batman's surveyor, Wedge, on returning to the Yarra River later in the year, found that the expedition of John Pascoe Fawkner from Tasmania was in occupation of the Melbourne site.

Fawkner as a boy had been with his parents on one of the ships that endeavoured to found a Port Phillip settlement in 1803, and claimed to have heard of the existence of the Yarra River from a recaptured prisoner. The only occupant of this region from 1803 to 1835 was William Buckley, a former British soldier of giant stature who had escaped from the settlement of Colonel Collins and lived with the aborigines for thirty-two years. Buckley gave himself up to Batman's men.

Governor Sir Richard Burke of New South Wales approved the settlement; compensation of £7000 was paid to the Association that had financed Batman, but no free land was granted to Fawkner or Batman, though



(Above) Collins Street, Melbourne's main thoroughfare, as it appeared in the early 1860s little more than ten years after the discovery of gold. (Below) Swanston Street and St Paul's church, 1864





Melbourne Cricket Ground: a print of 1864. This scene presents a very different aspect today for it is the site of the main stadium for the 1956 Olympic Games, the first to be held in Australia

many who came later to the Port Phillip settlement with their flocks were permitted to occupy large tracts at nominal rents under the Squatting Act.

The population, stock and wealth in the settlement grew with steady migration from New South Wales and Tasmania until the village was recognized and visited by the Governor from Sydney with much ceremonial. The township had been surveyed for sale by Robert Hoddle, Surveyor-General, who is responsible for modern Melbourne's spacious streets and narrow parallel lanes, the allotments being planned as building blocks with rights of way at the rear. Batman and Fawkner both were among the avid buyers who bought blocks costing from £20 to £60. They would be unbuyable today at £100,000.

The town narrowly escaped being called Batmania, Beargrass, or Doutta Illa. But the fact of Lord Melbourne being Prime Minister at this time turned the scale in favour of his name. Batman died in 1839 when his "village" was four years old, his son having been drowned before him in the river he had made famous. Fawkner lived on to a ripe old age, an historic figure in the Legislature,

to the partial eclipse of his more dashing rival.

As it grew, the new territory of Port Phillip chafed at its subservience to New South Wales. From 1843 onwards, agitation was continuous for separating the territory from remote control under a Superintendent nominated by the Governor of New South Wales. Nor did the approval of representation by six elected members to the Legislative Council of New South Wales abate it long. "Melbourne's state was peculiar", said Robert Lowe (later Lord Sherbrooke and Chancellor and Colonial Secretary in the Imperial Parliament), speaking in support of a motion by Dr Dunsmore Lang of New South Wales, "being a dependency of a dependency, being governed by a colony which is not permitted to govern itself." Resolutions from meetings in Melbourne were resisted in Sydney, although a Bill for self-government was promised by the Secretary of State, Earl Grey. The Separatist Party in Melbourne, therefore, nominated Earl Grey, the Duke of Wellington, Viscount Palmerston, Lord Brougham, Lord Russell and Sir Robert Peel, as additional but unasked candidates for their



Collins Street in 1883. By the eighties Melbourne was already a city of considerably over a quarter-of-a-million inhabitants, with its extensive programme of public building well established

Legislative Council quota, six citizens of Melbourne being nevertheless elected.

A Bill to separate Port Phillip from New South Wales and for "The Better Government of Her Majesty's Australian Colonies" passed the Commons and the House of Lords in August 1850 after a protracted debate. Queen Victoria had already indicated that when Port Phillip became an independent colony she would be pleased that it be named after herself.

So the little colony bearing the young Queen's name, and consisting only of 32,000 loyal citizens, 23,000 of them resident in Melbourne, indulged in appropriate revelry, bonfires and thanksgivings at the Separation, and formed their first Parliament on July 15, 1851.

The financial straits and droughts of the early 1840s being happily past, and revenue no longer handed over to New South Wales, the young Parliament with commendable despatch planned for renewed emigration, the setting up of a Supreme Court, the building of railways, the establishment of hospitals and general city and country expansion. But with incredible swiftness and effect, the discovery of gold in the colony in the first year of self-government brought about amazing and unpredicted results.

During the economic difficulties of 1848, hundreds of Australians had left for the gold-fields of California; however, after the decline of these and the fabulous finds in Victoria, they and many other gold-seekers returned, while an influx of immigrants from Britain, drawn from every section of the community, poured into Melbourne in search of quick fortunes. For ten successive years from 1851 Victoria produced over 2,000,000 ounces of gold annually.

Serious problems of accommodation for the numerous gold-seekers presented themselves in Melbourne. Building operations ceased, industry was at a standstill; and special ordinances were promulgated by Lieutenant Governor La Trobe against mining permits being granted to deserting seamen or public servants who were absconding to join the columns of fortune-hunters making their way to the goldfields of Ballarat, Bendigo, Castlemaine and the numerous diggings beyond.

By 1852 the population of the colony had doubled itself and a large part of Melbourne became a canvas town. 174 tons of gold worth £14,000,000 were dug that year. At Bendigo, which took its name from a runaway sailor pugilist nicknamed after the leading prize-fighter of England, nuggets up to 530 ounces

were found, and 472,000 ounces of gold were sent by escort to Melbourne during the first twelve months.

But feeling grew among the diggers against payment of the Miners' Right, which fell heavily upon the unsuccessful or those plundered by bushrangers. Protests against "digger hunts" by police from the principal mining centres were not tactfully handled by the government. After rioting had broken out at Ballarat, an armed conflict took place between miners and troops at the Eureka Stockade, where miners had enclosed themselves against authority. An officer and four

soldiers were killed and twelve wounded, and twenty-four miners killed. Thirteen selected rebels were tried and acquitted; the miners' leader, Peter Lalor, who lost an arm in the fighting, was elected to Parliament and became Speaker in a more democratic era. Incidentally, his grandson, Peter Lalor, was killed on Gallipoli in 1915, fighting with the Australian forces.

As the alluvial gold finds declined, quartz-mining along the numerous gold-encrusted reefs took its place and was carried on with success at Ballarat and Bendigo until recent times. Prosperous provincial towns have

In May, 1901, King George V, then Duke of York, opened the first Federal Parliament in Melbourne. It then became the Federal Capital for twenty-six years until 1927, when Canberra succeeded it

By courtesy of the Agent-General for Victoria



taken the place of mining-camps there, and a wealthy farming hinterland and some new industries add to the present-day progress and wealth brought by gold.

Responsible government and substantial revenue, including the tax on gold export, the proceeds of land sales and the increase of population by 500,000 in ten years, made progress and development in Victoria rapid. The influx of gold-seekers had brought a valuable addition of venturesome pioneers from all walks of life; and as the alluvial gold diminished and the gold fever abated, there was a demand for development and production by enterprising workers in many categories.

Since the new Colony had no debts, and customs tariffs were more revenue-producing than protective, secondary industries began operations and prospered; the Colony becoming for many years the manufacturing centre for Australia.

It says much, too, for the vision and planning and the affluence of these early administrations that the magnificent buildings of Parliament House, Government House, the Public Library and Melbourne Town Hall

were built, and the splendid parks and gardens and world-renowned Botanic Gardens laid out, mainly between 1845 and 1875.

On a wave of progress Victoria took the lead in the movement towards Federation, but suffered severe economic setbacks in the early nineties through land-speculation. But the exuberant urge to grow and prosper triumphed.

Alfred Deakin, a young Melbourne barrister-minister of the Victorian Government, and destined to be three times Prime Minister of Australia, who had introduced irrigation to his native State with great advantage, took the lead in the move towards Federation of the six Australian Colonies.

The veteran Henry Parkes advocated Federation, and Edmund Barton in Sydney strove politically for it, and became the first Prime Minister. But it was the magnetism and fervent oratory of Deakin more than anything else that brought about its consummation in May 1901, when the first Federal Parliament was opened by King George V, then Duke of York.

Under Federation, External Affairs, Defence, Trade and other external powers

Of the many fine buildings in Melbourne which reinforce its claims to distinction as a cultural capital, the Public Library and National Gallery, which was opened in 1856, is a good example

courtesy of Frank Hurley, from Australia (Angus & Robertson)





The skyline of Melbourne with St Paul's Cathedral in the centre, seen from the Botanic Gardens

were transferred to the new Commonwealth by the six Colonies, now States, in a written constitution, and Melbourne became the temporary Federal Capital for the twenty-six years that elapsed before the Federal Capital at Canberra was built.

As the most highly developed State in the Commonwealth, though second in population to New South Wales, Victoria holds its own in industry, development and culture. Melbourne's Art Gallery is second to none south of the Equator; as befits a city that produced Melba, there are two Conservatoria; and an output of painters and musicians that greatly aids Australia's claim to have more artists and musicians *per capita* than any other country.

Victoria's inheritance from gold and wool and the pioneer spirit is securely maintained by diverse developments—by roads and railways reaching out to prosperous provincial towns and seaports; by civil air transport both intra- and inter-State and overseas in greater density and safety throughout Australia than any other country; by farms and irrigation and citrus groves and orchards,

and a prolific export of primary products.

Today Melbourne, spreading now with its suburbs over 250 square miles and with a population of 1,500,000, though heavily industrialized, maintains its beauty and the background of mountain and forest unimpaired, and prepares for the Olympic Games.

The famous Melbourne Cricket Ground is to be the main stadium for the contenders from seventy-five countries, its historic turf devoted to other sports than cricket. A special swimming-pool, cycling tracks, and hockey and football fields have been laid down at Olympic Park; and Port Phillip Bay and Lake Wendouree will see the tests in yachting and rowing. Australia shares with Britain, the United States and Greece the record of having competed in all Olympics since 1896. At the last Games Australian competitors won six gold medals. 800,000 seats have already been booked and £5,500,000 are being spent on the necessary arrangements for the Games and the visitors. An entire village is being built to house the competing athletes: Batman would surely have approved.

Fijian Train-Ride

by RICHARD HARRINGTON



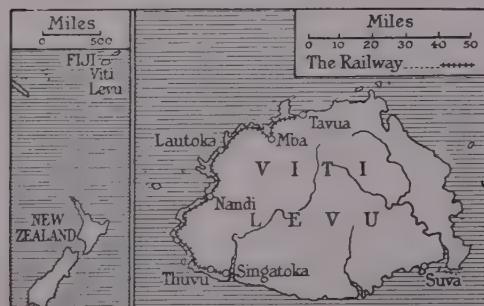
Photographs by the author, from Camera Press

According to the Fijian Visitors' Bureau, Fiji boasts the only free train in the world. The Colonial Sugar Refining Company operates, in addition to its normal goods-trains, two passenger-trains a week along the west coast of Viti Levu, Fiji's largest island, as the result of an agreement with the government made long ago, when the Fijians asked for free transport in exchange for the right-of-way through their land.

This "Sitima-si-Vanua" (Fijian for "Steamer of the land") has operated since 1905 between Kavangasan, outside Singatoka on the south coast, and Tavua on the north coast. No tickets are needed and there are no stations: you can get on or off anywhere you please. The beautifully kept 1900-vintage "Puffing Billy", with its two

carriages and a guard's van, runs a distance of 135 miles on two-foot-gauge tracks. Leaving Singatoka on Saturday morning at about seven o'clock it wavers along the coast past Thuvu and Nandi until at above five in the afternoon it reaches Lautoka, where it stays over Sunday. On Monday morning the train starts again from the main street in front of the Lautoka post office, finishing up in Tavua. By Tuesday evening it is back in Singatoka, ready to start another trip on Wednesday.

We caught the Saturday train at the bridge near Singatoka and, after shaking hands with the engine-driver, Mr B. R. Mangaru, we settled into a crowded carriage. Crossing sugar-cane fields with white blooms tall against the sky, passing through mangrove swamps or cuttings in the rock, often right out in the wilds, the train rattled along at an average speed of perhaps twelve miles an hour. With us on the train were jewel-studded Indian women dressed in saris and bushy-haired Fijians, half-asleep. Near Nandi a fifteen-minute stop for lunch brought out the local inhabitants, who sold pretzels, buns and doughnuts wrapped in leaves with curried peas and 'pop'. And so the train went on, timelessly, for no-one in Fiji worries overmuch about time, until early on Monday afternoon it steamed proudly into the 'terminus' at Tavua.



A. J. Thornton

Opposite) The Fijian "free train" consists of two open carriages, seating forty people in each, though actually about a hundred manage to scramble in. There is also a guard's van and a small refrigerator-car at the back, with a pay-van, not shown here, which travels half the way. During one burst of speed the train managed something like fifteen miles an hour until two cows got in front and the driver had to slow down for them while they stampeded off the track. Right) The Indian engine-driver, Mr B. R. Maniaru, telephones ahead to make sure the line is clear. He has driven on this run for the last twelve years and is well acquainted with all the villagers and sugar-workers who use his train. He has a great affection for his old engine, made in Britain, which he keeps in the pink of condition. Below) Every thirty miles along the line the train pauses to take on water from tanks. Passengers wander about, gossip and get hot water from the boiler of the engine to make their tea





(Above) When the train is delayed in the middle of nowhere, jerking abruptly to a stop since only the engine has any brakes, the passengers drop off and stand about in groups or perhaps pick sugar-cane from the fields near the track and chew it. Boys scramble on top of the "ice-car", a small van at the back of the train carrying fresh food to Lautoka for the sugar company's overseers. (Left) A Fijian girl, one of many passengers making long or short journeys up and down the coast, carries a large clay bowl slung in a basket woven from coconut-palm fronds

(Right) "Do not lean out of the window" . . . "Penalty for improper use . . ." These admonitions do not play a prominent part in the organization of Fijian Railways. Even though there is no communication cord, it is just as much fun pulling at the nearest tree. (Below) The Indians in Fiji are the most enthusiastic train-passengers, always visiting friends and relations up and down the line. In the past they often left no room on the train for Fijians of the original stock, who had to assert their prior right to accommodation as passengers on the train





(Left) Level crossings on Viti Levu are less complicated affairs than on British Railways and there are no gates to open. But the fireman has to run ahead to shovel gravel off the rails and he has numerous duties besides stoking the engine; he greases and brushes it and rakes away hot ashes. On one occasion, when a goods train in front had been derailed by a horse, he had to remove enormous piles of sugar-cane spilt on the track. (Below) At Lautoka, where the train stops for the night, the pay-van, containing safes with wages for the sugar-workers, is shunted off to a siding by manual labour



Delta Farm

by NAOMI MITCHISON

Besides having written well over thirty books, Mrs Mitchison runs a farm in Argyllshire and thus brings the eye of practical experience to bear on the relationships between men, animals and the land; different though they are in Egypt, where the water on which all depends must be constrained or coaxed into human service, and in her native Scotland, where it often falls in unwanted excess

My friends in Egypt have a farm in the Gharbiya Province, the good lands of Egypt. They also own an estate on the edge of the Western Desert, which now consists of a shack with a few olive-trees round it, a well which unfortunately only gives bitter water, and a couple of irregular patches of barley, a rain-crop, the kind that is hastily snatched here and there by the Bedouin who barely scratch up the land and depend on the winter rain to give them a crop on ground which will be brown desert for the rest of the year. Apart from that there are stones—and the wonderful soil which, when irrigated, grows trees and gardens like those at nearby Maryut or vines like those of the Gianachis vineyards. But how to irrigate? There is a canal half a mile away, but down 'hill'; it would need a pump and either a small canal or a huge pipe. That will not happen tomorrow. Meanwhile it stays barren.

But the other land is in full production as it probably has been for several millenia. For those unromantic enough not to demand mountains, it is very beautiful. The great bowl of cloud-flecked blue sky arches over it as in East Anglia, but the colours are brighter and the sun strikes a little exhaustingly, even in spring.

The farm is owned jointly by a family of typically Egyptian complexity; I never quite sorted out all the cousins! A long time ago the grandfather built a square, high-walled mud village for the fellahin. One of the main farm problems is that this has become terribly overcrowded and quite unfit to live in by modern standards, though it is no worse than a thousand others. He also built a high-roomed "big house", now rather tumbledown, in a faintly Italianate style, with a cattle-court and store-sheds. There are 233 acres, partly farmed by the family or a steward, but mostly let out to the villagers in strips, which are distributed so that each tenant has a strip in one of the big fields bearing the main crops.

There are thirty-six of these tenants, with holdings of two to six acres on which they, their wives, sons and daughters all work; each

acre has in fact to support more than one person; when we worked this out in detail with one of them it looked as though the family had enough to eat, what with beans, maize, rice, vegetables, milk-products from cow and buffalo and so on, but probably they didn't eat meat more than two or three times a year and deficiency diseases are still common. There is some extra work at busy times, but it is certainly difficult to buy clothes or cigarettes or even to send a promising boy to school, though that is now very much cheaper than it was before the new Egyptian government came in. Yet I was constantly struck, in Egypt, by the better health of the children. Five years ago there was ophthalmia, obvious bad nutrition and rags; there is a great change for the better now.

One of the main ways in which the fellah has been helped by the Egyptian Government is by fixing the amount of rent he has to pay at £24 an acre, double the amount of the land tax which the landlord pays. In the old days there was a disastrous system by which anyone wanting land—and there were far more potential tenants than available holdings—tried to offer a better rent than his neighbour. The landlord would take the highest bid. Naturally this did not happen everywhere and there were good landlords; often enough in the days when cotton prices were bad, my friends let their tenants off part or all of their rent. But equally there were landlords who never visited their immense estates for fear of being—very justly—murdered.

Work began in the early morning with the lifting of the light mist that blurred and softened the whole great plain until the sun dispersed it. The cattle and buffaloes were driven out and tethered, the little donkeys were loaded up or perhaps the family camel. All the family except, I suppose, the very old, came out of their mud village cheerfully prepared for another day. They worked long hours, from dawn to dusk, or beyond if it seemed necessary. But the pace of the work was never that of an English farm. There was no alternative occupation which they were

longing to pursue; hardly any of them could read or write. Home life is not desperately thrilling in a couple of overcrowded mud rooms with no furniture, hardly any windows and a small tin lamp for all the light. So, by day, they were not so much working as living, and by the evening they did not look tired. Perhaps this was partly that February is not a very busy time. They are then preparing the cotton-ground, ploughing slowly with an inefficient wooden plough, or smoothing the ground with a wooden bar on which two or three would sit so as to weight it. The irrigation or drainage ditches might need clearing or the buffalo must be yoked to the *saqiya*, the hollow water-wheel continually scooping up the irrigation-water and flooding the small ditches with it. But there was no sense of urgency at that time of year, even though there are no harder workers than the fellahin.

Perhaps it may be different at the next busy time, the cotton-planting in March. They asked me to come back for it. I said perhaps next year. If so, they said, I must eat rice-pudding with them for luck and be sure to wear a white or pink dress. The white rice helps to make nice white cotton.

The cotton which, in order that more food-crops should be produced, may now only be grown on a third of the land, is a single-year crop, but others go two to the year. Wheat is followed by rice or sometimes tomatoes; the year after, the beautiful deep green *berseem*, the Alexandrian clover, is followed by maize. Another alternative is flax, now in pale blue flower, and beans, favourite Egyptian food and growing magnificently this year, or sometimes such vegetables as cabbage and marrows. Most of the berseem is used for the animals; you start at one end of a long strip, cutting with a sickle and bringing back armsful or donkey-loads to tethered cows or grey friendly buffaloes with their lovely mild eyes and long lashes but revolting sparse body-hair. When you get to the end of the strip the beginning is ready for a second cut. In some parts of Egypt berseem is grown annually, but only as a winter crop. So fodder is short in summer and the beasts suffer.

In February the wheat is mostly in full ear, a bearded wheat, not as heavy as our good East Coast wheats. Mursi who came round with us—a man with a broad, kind, lined face, almost like a Flemish painting—was proud of his wheat, kept on picking an ear to show me, and explained how this strip was broadcast, while in that ("and see how much better it is!") three grains were dropped into each

hole and covered. These separately planted grains had tillered splendidly, so that each plant had up to eight or ten strong stalks. The danger is that the sun may wither the grain. When I told him that the danger for the corn on my farm was that it might be beaten down by heavy rain, he laughed and laughed!

He was very proud of his beans, too, up to five feet high, and also of the village cattle. The cows are a leggy breed and the milk-production is low, because they have also to be draught-animals and in summer there is not enough fodder. But better breeds do quite well in Egypt when they are kept for milk-production alone and properly fed. Most of the milk comes from buffaloes, though they too turn the water-wheels, blindfolded so that they should not get dizzy and ambling round at their own pace. Buffalo milk has a high cream-content; up at the farm we had a big black earthenware jar of soured buffalo milk with a heavy crust of cream. This has a nice, rather cowy taste, very unlike our sterile, tasteless London milk, and one dipped into the pot from time to time and ate it with bananas or the strips of sugar-cane, which are so nice to chew. The animals were all in good condition and obviously well treated. Even the camels looked comparatively amiable; they can't, after all, help the sneer which Nature has nailed onto their faces.

This amiability extended to the wild birds. The beautiful "buff-backed" herons—though they were pure white at that time of year—clustered round the field-workers, stepping elegantly, without hurry, out of the way when one came near. Hoopoes chased one another through the bushes; there were wild doves as well as the house-pigeons which live in huge jars slung from the reed ceilings of the mud-houses and are more useful as food than harmful as crop-raiders.

The only hand-implements I could see on the farm were the sickle for cutting the berseem, often done by women or the older children, and a mattock, which is an all-purpose tool for breaking the ground or—very inappropriately, I thought—for clearing drainage-ditches; the head is set at an angle and the user has to stoop all the time, working towards himself, not away as with a spade or fork. I demonstrated an imaginary spade and scythe to Mursi, who seemed doubtful. But the mattock must be beautifully balanced, for I saw a woman carrying one back on her head, the iron resting flat and the handle up at an angle, quite steady. How I would like

(Continued on page 335)

The Fellahin of Egypt

Notes and photographs by TELFORD HINDLEY WORK



All colour reproductions are from Kodachrome film

Orchards and palm-groves, brown ploughed fields and villages pattern the two narrow bright-green strips between the abruptly rising desert and the Nile in its course north to the Delta and sea

For thousands of years the Nile and the climate of Egypt have been turned to good account by the fellahin in achieving an agricultural output which is among the marvels of human existence. One of the earliest and most advanced civilizations of mankind was sustained by the food produced by these farmers who, by dint of their constant labour, manage to harvest at least three crops a year from the same ground.

Empires have waxed and waned in the Nile Valley, supported by their immense productive effort; yet they have seldom received more than a meagre share of its fruits, barely enough for subsistence. They get a paltry recompense for working as hard as any people anywhere. Nevertheless, their numbers have increased. Their only hope for some relief lies in the development of new and vast areas of land and better crop-strains, which cannot be achieved except through capital investment which it is beyond their

capacity to afford.

That this unrewarding toil has not embittered them, but rather led them to accept whatever Allah may provide, is a measure of the human dignity of these true Egyptians, of whom there are more than 18,000,000 in one of the most densely populated areas in the world. They meet adversity with unfailing good humour, whether it be a broken wooden plough-share, or one of the many diseases fostered by the very conditions which make their land so fruitful.

The inseparability of the fellah from his land, his animals, his home and his village has provided the fabric which has held his traditional way of life together through the ages. To those who look beyond the great monuments of ancient Egypt, the life of the fellahin can be glimpsed in its many aspects against a background of the beautiful countryside of the Nile Valley and Delta.



In Upper Egypt the Colossi of Memnon, relics of a funerary temple of ancient Thebes, sit on thrones, the stone bases of which are seasonally lapped by the flood-waters of the Nile. For millennia this land, enriched by the silt brought down from central Africa, has been farmed and grazed by the fellahin



(above) Near the site of ancient Memphis is the first pyramid to be built in Egypt. The step-pyramid, built by Pharaoh Zoser and Imhotep, ingenious adviser, has stood for nearly 5000 years in silent witness as the surrounding fields have been flooded, cultivated and harvested.

(right) The buff-backed heron (*Bubulcus ibis*) feeds on the verminous insects and other creatures at the edge of the advancing waters as a field is flooded or on those turned as the fellahin work the soil. They closely follow the farmers who hold them in great affection since they rid their land of pests. When these birds were threatened with extinction fifty years ago the British officials, then on service in Egypt, began a campaign of conservation which has restored the species to abundant numbers today. Tree-top nesting colonies are now numerous.





(Above) River-edge levees and canal banks provide the highways and byways for the fellahin and their animals. Carrying water-jars on their heads is a never-ending task of Egyptian women. (Left) The friendly nature of the fellahin has perhaps developed from their lifelong association with domestic animals. Their children's fondness for animals no doubt gives place as they grow up to an economic valuation of what is often their only material possession, yet the sense of affection remains as is apparent from their fables and conversation. (Opposite, top) Thermal air currents rising from the fertile, sun-beaten plain provide a dependable daily breeze for winnowing the various grains—usually wheat or rice. (Opposite, bottom) Canals filled with Nile water provide not only for the irrigation of fields and bathing and drinking, but also a place to wash and freshen vegetables before they are taken off to market.





The majority of the people of Egypt are Moslems. Every village has its mosque where the faithful gather on Fridays, the Moslem holy day, and on other occasions for prayers, reading the Koran, sermons and messages from the government through the Wakf, the Ministry responsible for religious establishments.



(Above) Bottomless clay pots are built into the mud parapets of houses as pigeon-nests in upper Egypt. The squabs are eaten and the guano is used as a fertilizer. (Below) Besides being invaluable for cultivation, the silt deposited by the Nile is mixed with straw and made into bricks for house-building





(Above) The camel is an ever-present feature of the Egyptian rural scene, serving primarily as a beast of burden and occasionally to turn the saqiya, one of the traditional devices for raising water. For this more often (below) a water-buffalo is used. Buffaloes are also much prized for their creamy milk



to be able to carry large weights on my head as beautifully as Egyptian women do!

Round the great wide horizons there are little bumps, each with a town or village, the Delta towns that Herodotus speaks of, islanded among the floods. Nowadays they show an occasional factory-chimney, as elegant, at a distance, as a minaret. My host and I thought we would ride over to the big village of Abu Sir, one of several ancient towns called Busiris. He had some bricks there, a family tomb, and a cousin's husband who was Mayor. I hadn't ridden for thirty years but, with a certain trepidation, I managed to get onto a donkey with a sheepskin strapped firmly round it. There was no bridle nor stirrups and at first the donkey insisted on walking along the very edge of a drainage-ditch. However he responded to the lightest touch of a stick on his neck or, less certainly, to a well-placed kick. We rode in along the main drainage-canal and then along the similar irrigation-canal; all the way there was the dual system which has to be kept in order if the land is to be sufficiently drained not to accumulate a dangerous amount of minerals.

Along the big irrigation-canals were the *saqiyyas*, a fairly modern type as compared with the old wheels with jars strapped on them, the dipping, weighted pole (*shaduf*), or the wooden Archimedes' screw, which are all still used. But here and there were modern pumps, often a bit shaky if you looked close, the petrol-tank tied on with string and leaks at all the joints, but the water pumping out strongly into the irrigation-ditches. Occasionally a water-work had been constructed across the mud road, the donkey jumped and I got a good grip of my sheepskin saddle.

At the outskirts of Abu Sir we passed some massive pieces of hewn red granite from some earlier city, too big to build in with mud bricks, and then crossed the Delta light railway, one of these nice Emmet affairs, and went to look at the new government centre, almost finished, with schools and various clinics and health units. They are all on a quite simple plan; the buildings can easily be put up locally. They should in time make a real difference to health and education, but meanwhile there are not nearly enough.

One of my host's family had a larger estate here, part of which has been taken over and divided up into small-holdings. It seems to have been an amiable enough transaction; most Egyptians realize the fundamental justice of the redistribution. Yet justice is one thing: the practical effect is another. So long

as the land is heavily over-populated redistribution may only mean redistribution of poverty. And sometimes the old fellahin tenants, especially perhaps if they farmed more land under the old rent system, are angry when the estate is taken from "their" landlord, above all if he was a good one. The old estate threshing-ground had an ancient threshing-machine in the middle and huge straw-stacks, far higher than the threshers' houses.

The village itself, was an incredible higgledy-piggledy of mud walls, stuck down on a small hill beside the Nile, in utter and complete planlessness. As a house crumbled another was built on the top of it, going away back to a perhaps more glorious past which is hopelessly buried at the very bottom. At the foot of the hill is a no-man's-land of pits from which house-mud has been dug, oddly reminiscent of shell-craters. The donkeys were to be sent back and we set off on foot.

The bricks were there, and also the family tomb, but my host felt that, unless he could find six blind men to pray there or something equally appropriate, he couldn't very well go in. He didn't really enjoy being stared at, but, after all, the inhabitants of Abu Sir have no cinema, and both of us were strange objects suitable for amusement. We went on to see his cousin's orange-grove, very beautiful at a certain distance, but a little unromantic close up, because the leaves, instead of being a dark glossy green, were caked with dust. There were fallen oranges and tangerines everywhere on the green weeds below the trees. How successful and ubiquitous our British groundsel, nettle and shepherd's purse seem to be!

Now, at the far side of Abu Sir, we came on the Nile, away below us, looking blue and harmless and biddable enough. Women had waded out to wash clothes; there were splendid vegetable crops growing just beyond the edge of the rocky bed. But each bank was a steeply inclined fifty-foot cliff, forewarning the onlooker of the awful enormous flood which would rise and rise, sweeping round the far curve, and lap against the very edge of the village hill.

We found the Mayor fixing up an out-of-door cinema show for the village children, and full of pleasant gossip. The big houses in the village are all slightly Italianate, with broken pediments and loggias, but everything is somewhat fallen down. Mud, mud brick, or even baked brick is not very durable material. Plastering has to be re-done very often to stay smooth and all of a piece. Some



A village in the Nile Delta: high-walled, moulded, made of mud bricks that have crumbled away through the centuries, the new houses being built upon the ruins of the old, thus raising the village ever a little higher on its low hill above the level of the surrounding irrigated fields

of the smaller houses are pleasingly decorated with painted trees, hands or trains. The Mayor had two fantastically tall palm-trees in his garden, and a magnificent friendly African which ate dates.

We were supposed to be having a taxi to meet us and take us home; it arrived at last and we got in, but it started barking within inches of the Nile precipice and we got out hastily, unchain of its brakes. By now there was a picture-postcard sunset with a ruddy glister on the river far below us. We started walking, and the taxi followed, arguing about the road and finally saying that it would have to go some ten miles round by the main town. We then discovered that sensible Mursi had kept the donkeys, so we mounted again.

The village beasts were streaming back out of the fields, to spend the night, almost certainly, in their masters' houses. They are safe there. People who are very poor can't take risks with their precious property. Sometimes we were knee-deep in brown sheep, sometimes starting round a donkey with a load of bencem bigger than itself. But the most alarming obstacles were the wooden

plough-beams carefully balanced and reaching right across the road, or the large wagging sections of irrigation-pipe. By now the sky had darkened, but it was still definitely blue, a deep and luminous blue stretching on to the stars, which were tilted in such an un-Scottish way that I could hardly even find the Plough and the Pole Star.

The irrigation-pumps were still working. Each had a little camp beside it, a few men sitting round a fire with the deep shadow of a casually pitched shelter behind them. They called to us as we went by. And now the moon was rising, near to full, so bright that my red wool jersey, which goes black by northern moonlight, still showed red. There was a plover that made a noise like hinges that needed oiling, the chugging of the water-pumps, and the continuous ringing of the crickets like unanswered Hobbit telephones. The dry air grew slowly cooler on our hands and faces, giving a feeling of timelessness. The donkeys moved steadily and our long-eared shadows lay sharp on the mud road. No more, only one large planet reflected in an irrigation-ditch.

Waters of the Nile—II

by ANTHONY SMITH

The author's participation in the Oxford University Expedition to Persia in 1950 led to his book Blind White Fish in Persia. Journalism took him to South Africa, whence he returned last spring by motor-bicycle as far as Uganda, following the Nile from there onwards for most of the 3500 miles of its length. His article in our October number covered half that extensive journey; this concludes it. Both deal with the many and much-argued problems of using the Nile's water

THE Nile at Khartoum is beautiful and Khartoum is a fascinating town. But it is at Khartoum that the Nile waters enter the region of real controversy, of real back-biting and the really hot sort of Arabic argument. This will, as likely as not, go on until the river ceases to flow or until the whole of its length from the Equator to the Mediterranean is unified by one governing body. Even so, that will not stop the ebullience of Arabic tongues disputing their rights. The topicality of this subject is in no danger of falling off and the present will probably not be, by a long way, the last number of *The Geographical Magazine* to deal with the Nile and its problems.

It is necessary, however, to get back to the Nile at the point where we left it at the end of the previous article, namely, in the middle of the Sudan. I have said it is beautiful there, and so it is. But it is everything else as well and, in order to get the Nile controversies into a better perspective, I wish to elaborate on this point for a moment.

Britain is an impersonal country in that each of us here only sees a minute fraction of what is going on. We hear of exports and imports, of budgets and of armament programmes. But it is all big and vague and it is easy to lose sight of the big problems in the presence of the small ones around us which we can see, realize and comprehend. All the information about our problems can be sought out from documents and people, but they have to be sought out and are not passing steadily before our eyes. An illiterate man in England can understand nothing about the mechanics of our national set-up.

But in the Sudan north of Khartoum and in Egypt he can see the set-up all too plainly. Every day that same illiterate would see the Nile. Every day it would pass steadily before his eyes. No documents are necessary to teach him the overwhelming importance of the broad river. It provides him with his drinking water. It irrigates his land and furnishes his food. And, as if that were not enough, he has heard that its unending flow

can be turned into power for factories, for light and for almost anything that needs energy of some sort before it can be manufactured. The Nile is always there and always a reminder of its omnipotence.

That was rather a long elaboration on a simple point, but if it has served to ram home that the Thames, as our major river, just cannot be compared with the Nile, then it has served well. Without the Thames, London and some towns and factories would be situated somewhere else and differently. But that is all. Without the Nile both the northern half of the Sudan and the whole of Egypt as we know them today would not exist.

Consequently anyone you meet there is bound to have an opinion on the Nile. And if he is asked for his opinion he will discuss it for hours, or for days because, with suitable intervals, he will be discussing it for the rest of his life. But—and this is why the discussions on this topic have been so volatile recently—for the first time the Sudanese are in a position to demand a say in the control of their part of the Nile. The Sudanese were not a party to the Nile Waters Agreement of 1929, the most important Nile agreement there has ever been. They were not invited to the Anglo-Egyptian conference at which it was concluded. Instead the British looked after their interests, for their country was then the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan.

When the Sudan became independent of foreign rule last December the 10,000,000 Sudanese suddenly woke up to the fact that they now control their affairs. "Now we say what happens to our Nile." But they have to say it without much money, with a not too stable Government, with Egypt producing plans involving the Sudan and Egypt more ready to take advantage of any water saved by any new schemes. In fact the Sudan is not in a good position to start wielding the power of the Nile. "When Allah made the Sudan", as has frequently been said, "Allah laughed"; but he has not stopped laughing



Courtesy of the Sudan Government Agency in London

(Above) A "very de luxe" train at Khartoum; next to air-travel, the railway is the easiest means of getting from Khartoum to Wadi Halfa. River and road transport along this stretch of the Nile is hampered by cataracts and (below) irrigated cultivation on its banks between Khartoum and the Nubian Desert

Courtesy of the Sudan Government Agency in London





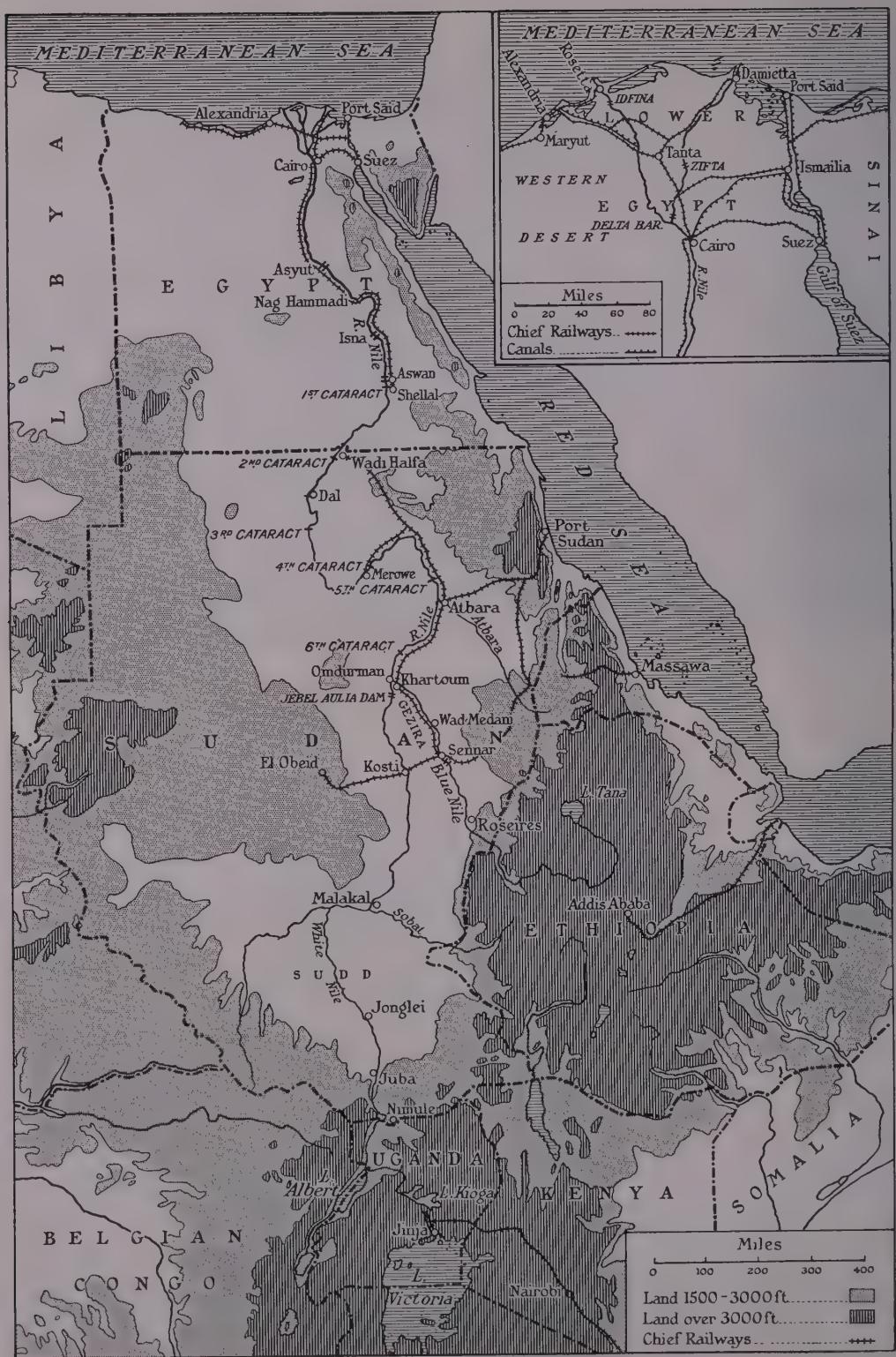
By courtesy of the Sudan Government Agency

Above) Some 350 miles north of Khartoum, while the railway crosses the dry, desolate Nubian Desert, the Nile makes a south-westerly sweep and in so doing travels twice the distance covered by the train.

Below) The 2nd Cataract, at Abu Sir : one of five in the 900 miles between Khartoum and Wadi Halfa

By courtesy of the Sudan Government Agency







By courtesy of Airwork, Ltd

Wadi Halfa. If the Egyptian proposal to build the Aswan High Dam goes through, this town 218 miles upstream will be submerged beneath its reservoir. The Nile is navigable from here almost to Aswan

yet. And, like anybody who feels he is being laughed at, the Sudanese have dug their toes in. They have dug them in deepest over Egypt's mightiest proposal, the brain-child of a Greek-Egyptian engineer, Nasser's pyramid, the hope of the Egyptians, the Middle East anvil of the East-West controversy, the Sadd el Ali, or, in other words, the Aswan High Dam.

But this is rushing ahead a bit, so far as our trip down the Nile is concerned if not so far as Khartoum thoughts are concerned. As the reservoir to be made by this dam would flood into the Sudan, so do opinions of the project's worthiness now seep into every Sudanese argument on the Nile. But for the present purpose it is necessary to get from Khartoum to the site of the proposed dam.

The easiest way to do this is to go by air. The second easiest is by train, a very *de luxe* affair. Travelling in it is like being in a brand new vacuum-cleaner: there is plenty of smartness and efficiency but there is an awful lot of dust as well. For the train travels right across the Nubian Desert, one of the driest, dustiest and most desolate stretches in the world. The third easiest way is by road, but convoying regulations provide additional obstacles. The fourth way is by river. This

is really very hard, for the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 6th cataracts lie between Wadi Halfa on the Egypt-Sudan border and Khartoum. The railway has taken most of the trade, so shipping facilities on feluccas are not good and anyway the Nile goes twice the distance you want to go by reason of an enormous kink during which it actually travels south-west for a large number of miles.

I had insufficient money for the air fare, thought it a waste to put my motor-bicycle on a train and so set off jauntily from Khartoum by road. I left the wide roads in the middle of Khartoum as I headed north. I left the less wide roads on the edge of Khartoum as I still headed north. Some three miles later I left any semblance of road at all and still tried to head north. I picked my way over fields, past irrigation ditches, over bridges made of a single log, past shying camels and tried to keep the rising sun on my right-hand side. But it was no good. I stopped and asked: "Is this the road to the north?" "Yes." And later on: "Is this a road?" "Yes." And another hundred yards later: "Is there a way over this ditch?" "No."

I still do not know how that bit of the journey is done. I tried again and again like

a veteran car driver confronted by a steep hill. But each time, after jolting through fields, wading with a spluttering machine through ditches, speeding hazardously across those tree-trunks and winding along paths, I still came to the impossible barrier of a big irrigation-ditch with no bridge to it. All the while the labourers insisted that I was right for the north. Maybe I was, but not quite right enough. Anyway there is no road as we know it which goes from Khartoum to Wadi Halfa. Instead, there is a first-class introduction to intensive land utilization by irrigation and the equally intensive complexity of land and water ownership by inheritance. As the sun set I rode, waded, jolted and picked my way southwards to Khartoum.

The next day I caught a train. On board there were many Egyptians and many Sudanese. Khartoum has plenty of Egyptian officials, and many Sudanese go to Egypt to study. So any train running between the two countries is bound to have both sides on board. Sooner or later the conversation will come round to the topic of the Nile. It might go something like this:

Sudanese: "Why build a dam costing £400,000,000 which you haven't got, when you are spending all the money you have got on armaments?"

Egyptian: "The Aswan High Dam project will bring another 2,000,000 acres under cultivation."

Sudanese: "Why not build smaller dams at places like Merowe and Dal and earn money from them to pay for others?"

Egyptian: "Merowe and Dal are in your own country."

Sudanese: "So will be some of the reservoir of the High Dam and Wadi Halfa will be destroyed."

Egyptian: "It is more economical to build a big dam than several smaller ones costing the same amount."

Sudanese: "You did not consult us before asking for money from the United States, Britain and the World Bank to build a dam which will flood 50,000 Sudanese from their homes."

Egyptian: "We will recompense them amply."

Sudanese: "But they will get disease if they are moved, as the last lot did, and anyway they don't want to go."

Egyptian: "Our two nations must take their places in the world now they are both free from tyrannous oppression and sacrifices must be made."

I say conversation might be something like that. Of course only among the most serious

and self-conscious of students around eighteen will it be phrased quite so stiltedly. But it will be along those lines. Sometimes, and apparently more frequently than happens with similar situations in other countries, those from the Sudan who have gone to Egypt to study become affected by the superiority of Egypt to the extent of despising the Sudan, in the same way as those at Khartoum tend to despise their fellow-countrymen 600 miles or more up the river in the region of the Sudd.

Meanwhile, as the conversation went on about the dam, about its estimated electrical capacity of 1,760,000,000 kilowatt-hours per year, about its volume being 48 times that of the twice-enlarged present dam at Aswan and even 30 times that of the Great Pyramid, the train continued its dusty way along the Nile, over the Atbara and out into the Nubian Desert. The contrast between the big talk inside and the horrifying waste outside was conspicuous. I have not seen many deserts, but none I have seen has been so utterly deserted as that Nubian end of the Sahara. "It is as big as the sky", said a Southern Sudanese. Not quite, maybe, but it feels like that. There are no hills to relieve its skyline, no patches of scrub to change its colouring. Instead a blanket of sand has dropped and drowned the earth; but it does serve as a first-rate backcloth for stimulating the mind into discussing such fantastic projects as the Aswan High Dam.

Once again I am jumping ahead. Yet so do the thoughts of everyone else in this area. It is after a day's travelling that the train reaches Wadi Halfa and goes no further. This is the town which will be submerged by the reservoir and the town which, for some reason, supplies the majority of the sailors who work the boats on the Sudanese Niles. Way back at Juba that tireless, relentless and merciless captain who had cannoned his way and ours along the White Nile north of Juba had been a Wadi Halfan. Wadi Halfa is also the border town with Egypt and the beginning of a stretch of navigable water up to Shallal, the terminus three miles south of Aswan.

It is an entrancing trip from Wadi Halfa to Shallal. It is exquisitely beautiful. The Nile is wide, flanked by its thin ribbons of green and then by wonderful hunks of rock. They are brown, their shadows are black, the Nile is shining and the sky is of a blue to cap it all. There is also an ancient temple—at Abu Simbel—perhaps the most perfect in its completeness of all the Egyptian remains. It is about 3200 years old and has later



Audram-Samuel, from The Glory of Egypt (Thames & Hudson)

The colossal statues at Abu Simbel of Ramses II, the Pharaoh from whose oppression the Israelites, led by Moses, fled out of Egypt. This is one of the two rock temples built by him about 1250 B.C. on the edge of the Nile forty miles north of Wadi Halfa. They will be submerged if the Aswan High Dam is built



scratchings on it done not only by modern tourists but by Greek soldiers who recorded their more bellicose visit of about 600 B.C. This temple would also be submerged by the reservoir of the dam.

At the stage of the journey from Wadi Halfa to Shallal it is impossible to keep the High Dam out of the account, for it would all be part of the reservoir of the dam: a distance which it takes twenty-four hours to cover by boat. At the end of this trip you pass the site of the dam itself, at present marked by lines on the steep rocky banks between which the Nile passes. Naturally everyone turned out to look at it. A German on one side of me, who had been earning good money building new palaces for the rich sheikhs in the Persian Gulf, was amazed by the project. "Phantastisch!" he muttered to himself. An Egyptian on the other side of me passed the dam off with a shrug as if it was an insigni-

fiant affair. He was not impressed by the enormity of the thing. The German said it would take 24,000,000 cubic metres of granite to make it. The Egyptian waved an arm at the hills to show there was enough. The German recalculated this in truck-loads; but the Egyptian (who could sit for all one day on the main north-south highway of his country north of Aswan and perhaps never see one truck) brushed this figure off as well. "We will do it", he said. "And what about silt blocking up a dam with a reservoir 300 miles long?" "The dam will only be completely banked with silt," said the Egyptian, "after 3000 years as only 40,000,000 cubic metres will be deposited each year."

And so the talk went on. The German, probably familiar even as a child with the heavy industrialization of the Ruhr, was amazed. The Egyptian, probably familiar with mud dwellings and camel-drawn carts

(Opposite) *The present Aswan Dam, looking west across the Nile. It was built in 1902 and has since been raised twice, in 1912 and 1933. Any further attempt to raise it would endanger the structure, hence the need for a new dam if more water for Egypt is to be stored at this point.*
(Below) *Elephantine Isle, seen across the Nile from Aswan town, some three miles below the Dam*





Aerofilms

(Above) The Nile Barrage at Asyut. Six barrages in Egypt control the river's flow at times of flood.

(Below) The Archimedean Screw, one of three traditional methods used for raising Nile water onto the irrigated fields ; the other two being the saqiya (water-wheel) and shaduf (weighted beam and bucket)

J. Allan Cash





The height of the Nile flood has been recorded annually in Egypt since at least 3600 B.C. and today the measurement continues. The domed building in the centre of this photograph contains a nilometer, one of several still in use in Egypt. It was constructed in 716 A.D. and consists of a well with an octagonal column in the centre which is inscribed with ancient Arab measuring marks

and the poverty of the fellahin, was not amazed but was confident. I got the strong impression that some time or other, between the two of them, between the confident politician and the entranced engineer, that dam will get built and that the only problems are when and how.

One final feature of Aswan which impresses itself deeply upon anyone arriving there in the summer months is that Aswan is a hot place. It is one of the hottest places in the world and not a good place to store 135,000,000,000 cubic metres of water. For

every year evaporation would skim off the top ten feet of water from that 300-mile-long lake. That is a lot of water. It is particularly so in countries like the Sudan and Egypt and will undoubtedly form a dominant part of the Sudan's objections to the Aswan High Dam.

The town of Aswan marks the real beginning of Egypt. It is big. It has hotels. It has a tourist trade and many thousands of Egyptians. The tourists are milked, the taxis speed insistently along the roads and, of course, by one side of it flows the Nile, calm and serene and, now that another navigable



By courtesy of the Egyptian State Tourist Administration

Feluccas and house-boats on the Nile in Cairo. From Khartoum to Cairo the Nile is a single stream, with only one tributary, the Atbara, which joins it 1600 miles from the sea. After Cairo it divides again into the Rosetta and Damietta Niles, each 150 miles long, which form the fertile Delta

stretch has been reached, the highway for many feluccas.

Upstream of it is the old Aswan dam, built in 1902, raised in 1912 and again in 1933; but which cannot be raised again for fear of the whole thing collapsing. The reasons why so much energy is spent on Aswan are that it is an excellent situation for water storage and also that Egypt, by the nature of the country, has tended to work up the river. Even if an Aswan High Dam were possible anywhere nearer the mouth, it would mean flooding not 50,000 Sudanese but far, far more Egyptians from their homes. Besides, there are already barrages at Isna, Nag Hammadi, Asyut, Idfina and Zifta. There is also the Muhammad Ali Barrage at Cairo.

It is the Aswan High Dam which is the thing. The story, as you journey northwards and downstream, builds up to it. Having passed it you are conscious that you have gone

by and you tend to look and think southwards and upstream when considering the main hope of Egypt's increase in prosperity.

Ever since Egypt began to control the Nile, first by walls to keep out the flood and then by barriers to preserve that flood, there has been a growing determination to stop any water flowing out wastefully into the sea. By the Kasr el Nil Bridge in Cairo there is a stone pillar which marks the flood-waters of 900 A.D. In those days the floods came, destroyed and were, for the most part, wasted. Now Egypt has a chance of turning those flood-tables completely. And so, in a smaller way, has the Sudan. But somehow this will have to be to the satisfaction, or the compromised satisfaction, of all. The Nile Waters Agreement of 1929 is now out of date. The 30,000,000 people who depend on the Nile must have a new agreement worked out before very long.

Two Englands Apart

II. "Leeds Leads"

by KAY CICELLIS



Aerofilms

(Above) Quarry Hill Flats, Leeds. This block covers twenty-three acres and houses 3000 people.

The author of this article is a Greek. Accompanied by another Greek, Mr Boucas, who took most of the photographs illustrating it, she set out to observe the effect of recent social changes on two kinds of English people, the owners of "stately homes" and workers in industry. Her first article, published in our October number, described how they have altered life in a great Yorkshire house, Castle Howard; here she draws a contrasting picture of renewal in a neighbouring industrial city

"I STILL wouldn't like to live here," had said the woman in the group of visitors at Castle Howard, "I still prefer my own little flat."

I tried at once to imagine what it looked like, her little flat, what there was in it that gave her this extraordinary sureness, this impermeability. I wanted to see her, or people like her, in their own house, in their own world, after having seen them wandering, detached and incongruous, among the great four-poster beds, reflected in the gleaming parquet, stared down at by rows of bearded, breast-plated Earls of Carlisle.

And so I went to Leeds.

When I enquired there about the sort of flat an average wage-earner would be living in, somebody in the Civic Centre nodded and

said: "Ah, you must mean one of the Corporation flats."

That word "Corporation", though I didn't pay much attention to it the first time, was to pursue me and haunt me during my whole stay in Leeds; it cropped up in every conversation; it loomed and towered, with a mammoth C, over every subject I tackled; it seemed to protect, shelter, support, regulate every domain of public life. It was a general term of reference.

"Civic" and "City" were also words that I kept hearing in Leeds—the Civic Centre, the Civic Hall, the Civic Theatre, City Square, City Station—they seemed the inevitable adjectives. I suppose the system of administration cannot be very different in

Leeds from that in London, yet in Leeds the "City" seemed to be a much more emphatic presence, and the whole vocabulary pertaining to city affairs had a definitely more modern ring; phrases like *Concentrated Parks*, *Central Drawings*, *Industrial Officers*, *Government Areas*, *Household Advisors*, made me feel I had crossed some fast, new Gothic wall into a brand-new century.

Though Leeds may sound modern, it does not look so. One reason perhaps is that the major monuments survive here; the Corporation has chosen to be found in its monuments, away from the centre. They do not meet the eye at once; one has to discover them. Meanwhile, one's attention is first drawn to the old, solid part of the town, the great, rounded houses, the elegant streets over, such were built in the early years, the lamp-posted walls, the lawns, gardens—those straight, interminable rows of back-to-back houses. That was my first view of Leeds. The back-to-back houses were the first workers' dwellings to be built after the Industrial Revolution. They are so named because each row really consists of two rows of houses stuck back to back like Siamese twins, each now looking out on a street. The street and pavement outside these houses seem a continuation of the same grey, flaky substance which the walls are made of; they are unbroken by any green, any trees.

But if one goes near the back-to-back houses, one realizes that a great number of them are empty, uninhabited. The doors are sealed with dust. Window-panes are broken, or entirely missing. A group of children are attacking one of them with stones, seeing in it a besieged fortress. Some houses are in the process of being pulled down. With an immense sense of relief one sees that after all these are only shells of human habitations.

In the other direction begins the industrial area, where all day the Corporation has been busy before, and especially since the war. During Corporation has been engaged in a battle the war in one of the most important urban-clearance programmes in Britain. And by now, when even the most determined optimist in the party of clearance can see that the struggle goes on, he can still find plots of ground and more empty plots of ground where back-to-back houses used to stand, now filled with rubble and ashes. It was these empty plots, these silent streets that made me ask, naturally: "Where have all these people gone? Where are they living now?"

There are several answers to this question. One of them is a place like Quarry Hill

Flats. It was started before the war, and completed in June 1941. Quarry Hill bursts upon your vision, takes your breath away with its sheer size. I think it is truly the largest building I have ever seen. It covers, without any interruption, an area of no less than twenty-three acres, an immense grey Colosseum of concrete divided by name only, not socially, into thirteen "houses", and containing not self-contained flats. One could talk of the rooms as of a population almost—there are four of them, as many as in the capital of a Greek island I know.

When I entered Quarry Hill Flats through one of the four great tunnel-like entrances, I thought I had come upon a small-town public square. The formidable concrete mass was nothing inside. There were patches of well-kept lawn, a few benches, beds of tulips arranged in a formal pattern. There was a pavement, a row of shrubs, and a small flow of strollers, mostly women with prams. The pavement was only a short strip a few hundred feet long, but it was an exact replica, in miniature, of a busy shopping street—as if a fragment of a street had been bodily lifted and inserted into the huge concrete mass.

There was a very modern-looking fish-and-chip shop, a hairdresser's, a butcher's, a chemist's, a greengrocer's. Opposite the shops there was a long, low building: the Day-Nursery. But the most important link in this strange artificial street was the Commercial Laundry—not a Laundry—furnished with all the necessary washing and drying equipment, which the housewives perpetually frequented. Several women were coming in or going out of it with great bags, bundles of laundry full of washing. I heard a quiet-talking, over-hamped man ask one woman: "Mrs Jackson, isn't it a laundry-day today?" She smiled, nodded: "Yes, I know, I haven't yet had time to get down to it. Mr Lowton."

I met Mr Lowton myself a few minutes later. He is the manager of Quarry Hill Flats. He told me that in order to avoid crowding each family in Quarry Hill uses the Commercial Laundry in an aggravated way, taking turns. I was amazed at the Manager's memory. He knew all the people living in the flats by name as well as by sight. "I can almost recognize their footsteps when they come in or out at the office," he said. He had not had just fourteen years. He seemed to be the only real permanent link between the thousands of different families housed together in that remarkable centre. The manager had worked in all six and a half years, in more than one organisation. During



At manufacturing centre, in Photo Room

Leeds man look up, there's bad life is punishing money in it like a hammer. The people working here are too often it is depressed by this great machine. Their don't look as it, even use it. Amidst this great steel and some organism the old woollen industry developed into the manufacture of ready-made clothing. Today it employs twice as many people as the next largest industry, engineering. After these come the metal fabric and repair of vehicles, printing, paper and metal works.

The Leeds of the Industrial Revolution : rows of 'back-to-back' houses, crowded together, yet composing a community. The back-to-back houses of the slum quarters have already become things of the past. 14,467 houses were demolished in Leeds before the war ; a further 1570 have gone since 1954



Their place has been taken by the semi-detached houses of the big Corporation estates on the outskirts of the city. Instead of the dull, uniform slum-grey, there is the colour of bright paint; there are playing-fields and parks instead of drab streets. But the new society has yet to be built

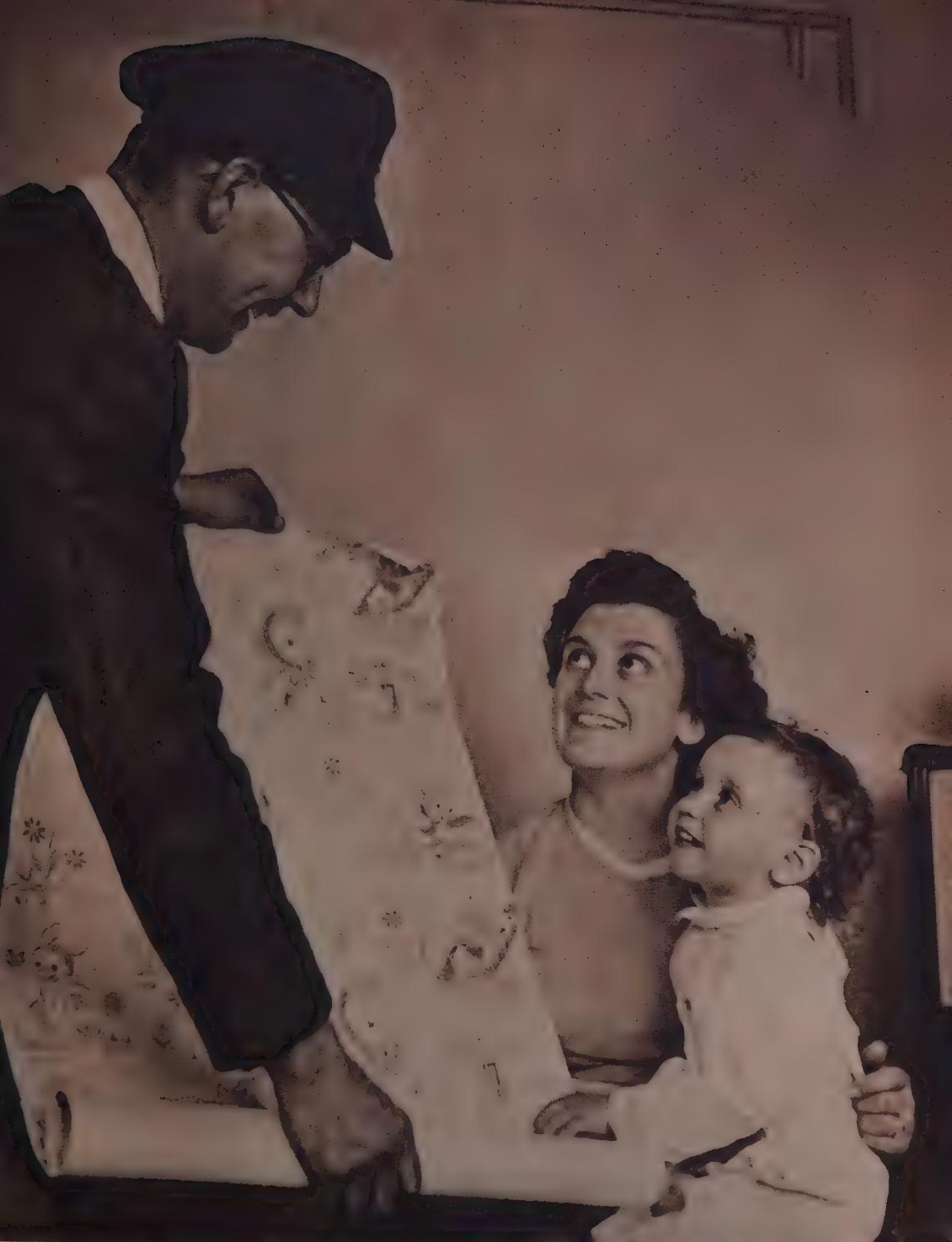
By courtesy of the City Architect's Department, Leeds



"Let Burton Dress You." The Cutting-Room of Montague Burton's factory in Leeds—streamlined, well lighted and heated, it is said to be the largest clothing factory in the world. Six Leeds firms handle over half the production and retailing of tailored clothes in Britain. The bandknife for cutting cloth in bulk, which introduced mass-produced clothes to the world, was invented and first used in Leeds

courtesy of Montague Burton, Ltd





The baby is ready for bed, but she will be allowed to stay up a little longer to admire the new wallpaper her father has bought for her nursery. She seems to approve of ducks. This young family moved into their Corporation house six months ago and they have already decorated a great deal of it. But there is always something more to be done. This material preoccupation with things to be done is the chief reason for their tendency to neglect social life, for "not bothering much with the neighbours".



Here are a few of the thousands of children who live in the modern flats and houses provided by the Leeds Corporation. For them there is space for any game from Red Indians to football; in the old days the street was the only playground, and there were no day-nurseries for the younger children.

Lewis's is the biggest department store in Leeds. "Lewis's the Friends of the People" was one of David Lewis's earliest slogans. The clothes shop started in Liverpool in 1836 has developed into a huge organization with branches in many parts of the country; but it still keeps the same business rule: good quality merchandise at low prices. It is significant that Lewis's centenary was celebrated in Leeds this year as a major public event





The Civic Hall (in the background) was opened by King George V in August 1933. The twin towers are 170 feet high and are each surmounted by a gilt owl, which is part of the arms of the Corporation. The Civic Hall contains a reception hall, a banqueting hall, a council chamber, the Lord Mayor's rooms, the Town Clerk's office and other departmental offices. It is truly the heart of the city. The building in the foreground is the recently opened College of Technology, the first part of a larger project of the City Council: the Central Colleges of Art, Commerce and Technology. It is a regional college providing a wide range of part-time and full-time courses to meet the varied needs of industry in Leeds and the West Riding. Some 6800 students attended it this session

the holidays they play together round the tulip-beds, skate up and down the strips of concrete, organize group games. But once the holidays are over, they too see much less of each other, since they go to different schools. As for the housewives, they meet in the mornings and talk a little as they go up and down that strange, private promenade, but otherwise lead separate social lives. They have friends and relatives outside the Flats, and though there is a Social Centre in Quarry Hill, it is used mostly for the discussion of practical problems concerning the flats themselves. I was pleased, I think, to hear this; that enormous amphitheatre, those high, stern walls had at first alarmed me; I had feared that the people enclosed behind them would be completely cut away from the rest of the town, and would develop a self-sufficiency which at first sight could only appear slightly monstrous.

From the outside, the flats by no means looked like a 'modern paradise'. They were still tinged with some of the greyness, the drabness of the slum quarters. It was not a complete change. But when I visited Mrs Smith's flat, I had to admit they were much nicer inside. Mrs Smith was a young housewife who had been at Quarry Hill for some time. Her husband was a lorry driver, earning a salary of £8 a week; the rent was 19s. 9d. a week. The flat was quite gay; there was plenty of light. Mrs Smith's furniture was very modern, streamlined, of a light-coloured wood. There was a wireless and a television set; a few books: Mrs Beeton, *The Ascent of Everest*, *The Valley of Decision*, some travel-books. It was extremely tidy, too tidy perhaps. I think the only personal note I saw was the *Radio Times* encased in a hand-embroidered cover.

But the memory of the back-to-back houses was still too vivid in my mind to make this seem of any possible importance. The large, generous windows, the baby girl playing in the polished kitchen, the mother, clean, pleased, in perfect control of her small, easy kingdom—this is what remained, and it was on the whole a good, reassuring note.

Quarry Hill is not the only block of flats of its kind. Several other blocks have been erected, or are being erected, on areas cleared up before the war according to long-term redevelopment plans, though none of them is quite as big and impressive as Quarry Hill.

But these great blocks of flats in the industrial centre are not the only answer to the question I had asked when I left the

evacuated slum quarters. Another answer—and I should say a much more common and favoured one—is what is known as the new Corporation Estates.

Away from Quarry Hill, away from the industrial centre and the abandoned slums we drove, till concrete and stone broke up and gave way to brown earth and trees. We rolled along the York Road till we came upon a factory. I think it manufactured bacon; it was smokeless, cubic, flashing with glass. Then at a small distance I saw another factory, Potato Crisps written in big letters across it. I thought: "It's going to happen all over again—another industrial centre." But the factories remained as smokeless, as cubic, and as far apart; and instead of the leprous eruption of slums that had spread around the old industrial centre, there appeared—the Seacroft Estate. Over the shoulder of a low hill, small square houses of a pale beige colour emerged, like writing in invisible ink, out of the beige-coloured landscape. The only touches of colour were the trees, and the brightly painted doors and windows: sky-blue doors, yellow doors; white curtains at the windows; fire-engine-red pipes running up to the roof. The weather was grey, warm. I sat on the edge of the road and watched sleepily, half-sunk in the quietness of the place. But the quietness was definitely inhabited. A woman in a cornflower-blue dressing-gown came to her gate and gazed dreamily down the road. A group of boys went off pond-fishing, equipped with minnow-nets; they disappeared in the neighbouring woods.

I heard the sound of a horn. Turning round, I saw a big white van slowly drawing to a stop in one of the drives. It was the mobile shopping van. Several housewives gathered around it with lists in their hands; quickly they bought what they needed and went back to their houses. I remember seeing just such a van in a village in one of the Outer Hebrides. The inhabitants of that primitive community had to use that van because there was nothing else for them to shop from for miles. Seacroft, which is anything but primitive, has recourse to the same method, because it has isolated itself. The Hebridean community is isolated because it is gradually dying out. Seacroft is deliberately isolated, and there all resemblance ends.

In fixing these new industrial zones the Corporation has endeavoured to place the factories near the sources of labour so as to reduce the time taken by the journey to work and back, thus saving time for leisure and

recreation. They will all be separated from the residential areas by open spaces, playing-fields or belts of trees. There is already a primary school right in the middle of the Seacroft Estate, so that the children don't have to walk a long way to school and cross busy streets. A church is also in process of being built on the estate. It is obvious that Seacroft has gone several steps further than Quarry Hill in self-sufficiency.

After the shopping van had left, I visited one of the Seacroft houses. I was told that the family who lived in it had only moved into the house three months ago. It was one of the larger houses; the couple, Mr and Mrs Macmahon, had three children. Before coming to Seacroft they had lived in the slums. Mrs Macmahon was still considerably dazed by the change. She kept repeating to me: "Isn't it wonderful? Even if we had pots of money we could never have afforded a house like this!" Her husband, who is a joiner, earns from £8 to £10 a week. Their rent in the slum house was 5s. 9d. a week. Here, they pay 26s. 9d. a week for a two-storey house consisting of a living-room, kitchen, hall, bathroom, three bedrooms, garden—"there is even a gardening-shed," she said, marvelling, as if she had discovered it that very minute. They had brought over most of their old furniture to the new house. "Look", she said, pointing at the armchairs and sofa, "how the furniture used to get torn and damaged in the old house. You see that burn there? The sofa got burned because it was too near the fire. You couldn't help it. There just wasn't enough space. Everything was on top of everything else. When people came to see us, I had to send everybody out of the room if I wanted to lay the table for tea. Otherwise I couldn't move."

I asked her if they went out at all in the evenings, after the day's work. "Oh no," she said without a trace of regret. "We can't afford it. The house comes first. Besides we're much too busy, even in the evenings." I asked her if she minded being away from the centre of the town, the busy streets, the shops, her old neighbourhood, the place where she had grown up. She laughed: "Oh, I don't mind at all. The air is so good here. It's wonderful for the children. And there's a very good shopping centre down the road; I can get all I need there. We're very happy. It's a lovely house, don't you think?" With a rather wonderful smile, both shy and proud, she asked me: "Wouldn't you like to have a house like this as well?"

I left her, wondering at the strangely

effortless way in which this total uprooting had taken place, and at the tremendous weight this house must have in these two people's life for it to take so easily the place of everything else, to fill their whole world.

However, modern change in Leeds has not everywhere been effected with quite the same ease. I am told that there are some people who refuse to leave their houses in the slums. But they are few, and they are mostly old people, who do not want to change their habits; people for whom the lowness of the rent is a far more tangible reality than the wonders promised to them. Then there are the in-between places, where the rhythm and pattern of life has changed, but not the actual setting.

There was, for instance, Mr Villiers' outfitters' shop. There are very many of these small clothing factories in Leeds which supply big firms like Burton with part of their stock. Leeds has been dealing with cloth for many centuries. When the Flemish weavers came to England under the patronage of Edward III, the early wool trade soon became a flourishing industry. In the 15th century Leeds was already a centre of the cloth trade, and it was on the wide parapets of Leeds bridge that the cloth dealers exposed their 'pieces' on market-days. That is why the City's coat of arms bears a golden fleece on its shield. Clothing represents nearly 20 per cent of Leeds' industry; engineering and electrical goods come next. But Leeds is such a highly industrial town that the list of what it produces would fill up half a page.

Mr Villiers' shop must have been built at least a hundred years ago. There was a huge, black, barrel-shaped stove in the middle of the long, narrow room. The floor creaked; the ceiling was low; it looked like a loft. There were eight tables with sewing-machines fixed to them and one larger table covered with creased, thumbbed magazines. A blonde, middle-aged woman sat at a table drinking tea; another woman was sewing on buttons. Mr Villiers moved about the chaotic loft, caressed thoughtfully one of his three dummies. He was never far away; he never retired behind the frosted-glass impersonality of a private office.

"But we're keeping up with the times, you know," he said to me. "Let me show you this wonderful contraption. It is called a bandknife, and it can cut cloth in bulk." He slipped between the teeth of the bandknife a piece of cloth folded and re-folded till it was about six inches thick; he pressed it; with a neat click the knife cut right through

the cloth, with extreme precision. "Thanks to this little machine," he said, "we now have what we call mass-produced garments. We can turn out 300 garments a week! Once, I used to do quite a lot of bespoke tailoring. Now I sell most of my stuff wholesale to the big firms in Leeds. No, it doesn't all come from us, the big firms also do some of their own clothing themselves. But they need us as well, you see, they need us . . ."

The last two girls were getting ready to go. They put on their coats. I talked to one of them. She was a married woman, and she had moved to a house in the Seacroft Estate about a year ago. I could not help wondering how it felt for her to move from this fragment of old Leeds to her brand-new house. Did she feel the contrast? Was she at home with the old barrel-shaped stove, the creaking floor, the warmth and informality—or did it remind her too much of the unpleasant past in the slums? Did she look down on the humble factory? Did she long to get a job in the new streamlined Cutting-Room at Burton's?

And Mr Villiers—how much longer would he be there?

Looking at the people of Leeds walking down the central streets of the city, one notices far fewer nuances among them than those one finds among the houses. There are no striking contrasts, as there are between the slums and Quarry Hill; between Quarry Hill and Seacroft; Seacroft and the little factry. In the streets, it is as if the people all belonged to one class. The clothes, the shopping-bags, the make-up on a woman's face, the toy in a child's arm, the accent, the tone of a voice—all this remains extremely uniform. No striking examples of shabbiness, no flash of elegance either. Perhaps this is due to the fact that the big business men, the really rich people and their families all live outside Leeds, in the country (sometimes even in London), and so there is nothing to mar this uniformity. It is the same with the main department store in Leeds, Lewis's, and perhaps that will better illustrate what I mean. Lewis's is neither highbrow like Harrods nor popular like C & A—miraculously, it manages to reconcile both types of shops. There are model-gowns, an expensive golf-outfit shop; there is a department wholly devoted to workers' overalls.

I noticed the emphasis placed by the Corporation on essential welfare work—whatever is utilitarian, in the best sense. It was this emphasis that gave me the impression of visiting a different country. The Corpora-

tion thinks of everything. Apart from the tremendous housing schemes, there are the new schools (five completed, eight in preparation), the new hospitals, the new University buildings, the Civic Theatre. The Corporation has even thought of building a Home for the Old, designed in such a way that it contains not a single step or staircase to strain the old people's legs. Wherever I went there was a wonderfully comfortable feeling that everything was being taken care of: a continuous, unquestionable guarantee of well-being.

I was not the only one to have this feeling of things happening, things getting done. The people of Leeds are aware of it too. They follow the city's growth with interest, often with excitement. They know about all the improvements. They discuss the new schemes. They are well-informed about future projects. They are certainly not passive onlookers. One inhabitant of Leeds, after having shown me, not so much the beauties of Leeds, but its commodities, couldn't help crying out, with an enthusiasm which one would normally have associated only with beauties: "Ah, give me Leeds every time. Leeds leads, I say—that's our motto. Better than any of that Latin stuff."

This zeal, this industriousness, this tireless appetite for improvement, and the absorption, the utter contentment in the pursuit of improvement—I recognized all this. I had found it at Seacroft; at Mrs Macmahon's, as she sat making her muslin curtains, planning the new bedroom suite, wondering what to plant in the garden; spending happy, tired evenings at home and not bothering much about the neighbours, about going out—the complete security, serenity of dealing with material questions alone, restating all problems in material terms.

Was this the secret then? Was it this that made the visitors at Castle Howard so self-possessed, so unenvious? Was it this that made them bear change, uprooting, isolation, a social life reduced to the bare essentials, with such ease? They are busy building themselves a new society; so busy indeed that for the moment it is anything but a society. They are building a huge, ultra-modern house; they have not begun living in it yet; I think it will be some time before they do. And when the time comes—what are they going to put in it? And will they think of looking out of the windows? Perhaps they will, and then for the first time they will really see Castle Howard. But by that time it may be too late for envy of any sort.

"Over Guiana, Clouds"

by MICHAEL SWAN

Michael Swan, whose book about Mexico, Temples of the Sun and Moon, appeared in 1954, spent several months in British Guiana in 1955 at the invitation of the Colonial Office, gathering material for a volume in the Corona Library on that Colony which is to be published in the New Year by H.M. Stationery Office. The following extracts are taken from it by permission of the Controller

To the north, beyond the three jungle-bound peaks which give Trinidad its name, the Caribbean lay clear and vividly blue; a schooner, pink sails full in the breeze, rested on the water like a giant piece of coral which had come to the surface. Then, some miles to the south of the island, we were flying above another sea, a viscous, pink sea, the colour of a schooner's muddied sails, a sea in which was suspended the alluvial flow from the rivers of Venezuela, the three Guianas and Amazonia.

We could see, through the clouds and the steam haze, the vast panorama of flat jungle stretching to a lost horizon, veined by rivers and more or less uninhabited, though once Warrau Indians had lived along this "wild coast" in huts on stilts that had made Amerigo Vespucci name the territory Venezuela, or "little Venice". It is a desolate coast, yet once

it had filled many minds with thoughts of golden cities and earthly richness. Now we were above the great delta where "Orinoco, in his pride, rolls to the main a rival sea of roaring war". This was the river which obsessed Sir Walter Raleigh for so much of his life, the entry to Guiana and the gold of El Dorado.

Although the figure of Raleigh appears on the stamps of British Guiana he never, in fact, explored any of the territory below the Great Mouths of the Orinoco. For him, as for all his contemporaries, Guiana, the "land of waters", was the country enclosed on the east by the Amazon and on the west by the Orinoco, including the courses and deltas of both; to the north it stretched to the Atlantic.

The aeroplane had flown beyond the mouths of the Orinoco and below us twisted the Amakura, defining the north-west border of British Guiana; next the Barima and the Waini, flowing towards the coast and then, a few miles from the sea, turning suddenly to the left as if at the last moment reluctant to burden the ocean with their refuse. I did not then know that there runs along the coast at this point a shell barrier which has resisted the pressure of the rivers. Some minutes later the Pomeroon, one of the four great rivers of the Colony, shined for a moment, and then we were above the Essequibo, where a simple civilization at last began. Canals were cut across its east bank, the lozenge-shaped islands dotting its breadth of fourteen miles were green with rice, and huts spread along the banks.

Next came the Demerara, less majestic than the Essequibo, but sinuous and graceful as we circled above it before landing at Atkinson Field. Atkinson Field, twenty miles from Georgetown, was built by the Americans during the last war, on land leased by them, as an air-base on the route to North Africa. In 1949 they re-leased the land for ninety-nine years; the Government now maintains the field as a civil airport by arrangement with the Americans. I drove from the airfield over a fine concrete road, but the pleasure was





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Georgetown, the capital of British Guiana. The city stands at the mouth of the Demerara River, on the narrow cultivated coastal strip which, extending for 200 miles, lies mostly below sea level

short-lived; suddenly the luxury of the United States ended at a picket-post and we were on British soil, literally, for, after a mile or two of battered tarmac, the road surface was composed of earth which had been burnt an attractive pink. Mounds of earth lay smoking at the roadside and labourers were filling up the large and frequent pot-holes. Today, I was told, the surface was particularly bad because there had been rain and the burnt earth had been washed away. "But," I said, "you have a hundred inches of rain a year—it must always be being washed away." "Yes, it is," said my companion, and I sat back to cogitate on this first anomaly of the Colony. It can truthfully be said of British Guiana that if God made the country the Devil made the roads. Although in the Colony there is only this road of twenty miles and a coast road of 240 miles, earth has been poured onto them since they were built—and

washed away with the first rains.

Apart from its surface the road from Atkinson Field to Georgetown is unbeautiful; on it one sees British Guiana at its worst. The twenty miles are lined with desperate little wooden shacks on stilts that seem about to subside, often huddled together as if it were a privilege to be on the road rather than open and free on the land behind. Beneath the shacks, in the spaces known as the "bottom house" or "under-d'-house", children played, old women sat talking and men saw to their dogs. Now and then we would pass a stretch of shacks outside which hung battered white prayer-flags, fluttering on twelve-foot bamboo poles. These were the homes of East Indians, as Indians are called to distinguish them from American Indians or "Amerindians". The nomenclature is complicated. East Indians themselves rightly say that they are just as much West Indians as are the Africans. It



Top: Georgetown

Before Georgetown finally became British in 1814 it was ruled and planned mainly by the Dutch, whose influence is still apparent above in the many canals and little bridges to be seen in the town. Below, Stabroek Market, though built in the 1900s, shows this and bears the capital's Dutch name.

Bottom: Georgetown





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An allocation of £2,000,000 was made in the two-year development plan, announced in 1954, for the purpose of rehousing the inhabitants of such badly overcrowded slum districts in British Guiana as (above) Albuystown, a part of Georgetown. (Below) One of the new estates built under this scheme



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A sugar-plantation on the British Guiana coast: "like a small town, dominated by the factory". Sugar (with rum and molasses) constitutes 53 per cent by value of all the exports from the Colony

was possible, apart from the prayer-flags and the little mosques, to distinguish between an African and an Indian area of the road. In an Indian community there were always a few neat little houses painted white, with glazed windows, the houses of those who had managed to do well for themselves. There were fewer such houses in the African villages.

Night came with tropical suddenness, and the filtered moonlight fell on the quiet waters of the Demerara at our side, candles were lit in the shanties and rows of dim, unlabelled bottles reflected light from hurricane lamps in the rum-parlours. Then suddenly a factory chimney loomed up and the sour-sweet smell of fresh molasses was in the air. We had come to Plantation Diamond, one of the largest sugar-estates in the Colony. It was like a small town, dominated by the factory; the road was full of people, walking or on bicycles, all more smartly dressed than the bedraggled peasants of the outlying districts. The car slowed down to negotiate a pot-hole and a young African in a spotless white shirt cried

to his girl, "Gal, me say wi'out fada pravacation me and you is for d' pictures dis rainy night", and they walked over the muddied verge towards the cinema. There were many hovels on the plantation, but there were nearly as many trim little whitewashed houses set in their patches of lawn. Opposite them, just visible beyond a high privet hedge, stood a large stilted house in colonial style, the house of the plantation manager, the human centre of the whole community. The little houses, I noticed, were new; they were, in fact, part of the extensive scheme of rehousing begun by the Government and the Sugar Producers' Association.

Soon we had entered the suburbs of Georgetown where the streets were crowded with people buying vegetables and fruit from the street market, or standing, laughing and talking in the dim light as they ate slices of plantain straight from pans of sizzling coconut oil. And so across the whitewashed town to my hotel on Main Street.

The night air of Georgetown is cool and

moves with the unceasing north-east trade winds which temper the humidity and keep the coastlands at a mean temperature of 82 degrees. To walk in Georgetown's streets at night is to feel intensely the luxury, the unreality of the tropics. The singing tree-frogs chorus a shrill note more like birdsong than the brekekekex of untropical varieties, and crickets wheeze in the intervals, great sounds that seem to come from the throats of animals. Main Street is wide and divided by a central path (a filled-in canal) edged with grass on which grow saman and flamboyant trees.

Main Street is quiet at night; a few couples walking hand in hand down towards the Sea Wall, or groups sitting on a bench talking quietly together. But if you walk the hundred yards from Main Street to Water Street, which is parallel to it on the sea-front, you are in another world. The shops and offices

of the copra and balata traders, the shipping agents and the import merchants are closed, but the rum shops on the corners are open, where the wireless blazes rumbas and mambas from Brazil and the Negroes buy each other "snaps" of rum and down them at a gulp, move their bodies to the rhythm of the music, laugh, tell each other stories and argue for hours on boxers' chances or the best men for the West Indies Test team—for there is hardly a man in British Guiana who is not passionately concerned in cricket.

The Georgetown day begins early to catch the cooler morning air; shops and offices open at eight o'clock and by then the shopping streets are full. Breakfast, or "tea" as it is called, is normally taken between six-thirty and seven o'clock with a leisurely reading of the three lively newspapers of the Colony, the *Argosy*, the *Chronicle* and the tabloid *Graphic*.

Threshing by tractor in a paddy-field in British Guiana. Rice, second to sugar as an export, is the most important domestic food-crop. Mechanization is being introduced on the large estates and there are government schemes for hiring equipment to the small-holders who are the main growers

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By then the singing of the tree-frogs has been replaced by the daylight song of Georgetown, the call of the kiskadee; there is not a moment of the day when one cannot hear the cry *kis-ka-dee, kis-kis-ka-dee* from the sulphur-yellow-breasted shrike with its flat head and protuberant beak.

When the sunlight is strong in Georgetown it is the most beautiful of towns, the brilliant whiteness of the wooden houses reflecting the sun and forming a dazzling background to the bougainvillea, morning-glory, the pink coraleta and, less commonly than one would wish, the superb poinsettia. Going south parallel to the river the Victorian colonial architecture, with its balconies in iron lace-work and decorated façades, ends where Main Street opens out into the Cathedral square. To the right are the excellent modern buildings of the museum, Booker's Universal Store and the equally universal stores of Ferreira and Gomes. This modern area was built on the portion of the town which was burnt out in 1945 and it forms an odd contrast to the untouched Victorianism of the rest of Georgetown. To the left the Cathedral stands in its grass-covered square, a building which I admired at first sight and came to love. It is the third cathedral to be built on the site and was completed in 1892 to designs by the late Sir Arthur Blomfield.

In 1782 the Dutch, who owned the Colony at that time, moved the seat of Government for the Demerara territory down-river to its mouth, where they began to build the town of Stabroek in a geometrical gridiron system of streets, divided by canals in the manner of their home-country. Then, as now, the land was over four feet below sea-level at high tide, and the canals were essential for drainage and water control. Four years after the town was planned it was still no more than two rows of houses, each a mile long, running at right-angles to the river. Visitors in those days were appalled by the filth and odours of the canals and even ten years later, when the Dutch were approaching the end of their possession of the Colony, Stabroek showed only the beginnings of its later beauty. Nevertheless the gridiron of broad streets in the modern town and the system of rectangular lots and dividing canals come directly from the town-planning of the Dutch; and so does the drainage system. The Dutch built a series of sluice-gates or *kokers* at points where the canals met the estuary and at low tide they would be opened to allow the accumulated water from the land to flow away; at high tide the *kokers* formed a barrier between the sea and the

canals. As a barrier it was inefficient and the sea and river were constantly encroaching on the town. It was not until 1882 that the Sea Wall was completed and kept the water under control. Violent storms and hurricanes are unknown along this coast, a piece of good fortune which has made the existence of the Colony possible. The old drainage system, providing an excellent breeding ground for disease and insects, survived in Georgetown until 1923, when it was replaced by a pipeline sewage system which has allowed many of the central canals to be filled in.

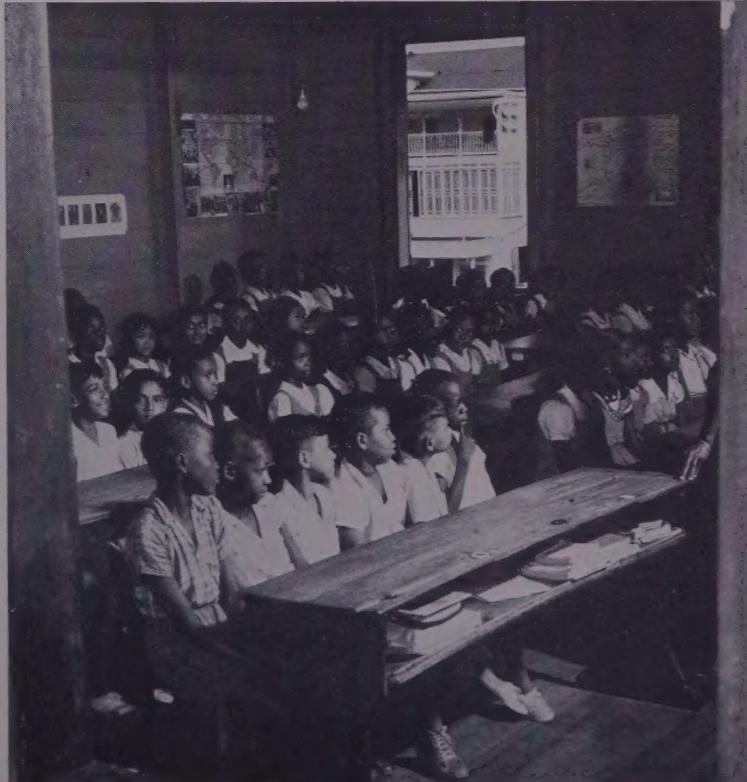
The finest architectural survival from Dutch times is the Stabroek Market which, although it was not built until the 1880s, is clearly inspired by Dutch styles of building. It is a long, gabled building framed in iron with a façade of white and brick-red painted wood with a central clock-tower charmingly capped by a red pyramid supported by slender posts on a balconied roof. Opposite the market stand the Public Buildings, built in the heavy style of Victorian classicism, from where the Colony is administered by British and local officials. In this and other government offices it is noticeable that almost without exception the clerks are of African descent rather than East Indian, although the East Indians form 45 per cent of the total population, and Africans 36 per cent. The streets and offices of Georgetown would make one suppose that the Colony was African with a very small minority of Indians. This is because the African is gregarious and a natural town-dweller, while the Indians prefer to remain in the country districts, working on the sugar estates, tending their paddy-fields and dreaming of the day when they will possess an acre and a cow. The African, with memories of slavery, has a subconscious antagonism to most forms of work connected with the land and his ideal is to find employment as a clerk, preferably with the Government. It is a position which carries social *cachet*, whereas a man who works with his hands on the land has hardly raised himself above the level of a slave.

From the Public Buildings another broad Dutch street, Brickdam, runs at right-angles to the river. On one side most of the lots are devoted to the compounds of the various Government Departments; in the Geological Survey compound the Government geologists plan their ceaseless expeditions into the Interior in search of oil and gold and columbite and tantalite. It is for them to prove that the Colony is a potential El Dorado, but they themselves refer to it as "A Land of Samples". Most useful minerals are to be found in the



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Above) The fine new buildings of Queen's College, Georgetown were completed in 1951 at a cost of £117,000, a large part of which was contributed by the United Kingdom Colonial Development and Welfare Fund. It is one of two government secondary schools; in addition there are some 290 government and government-aided schools as well as numerous private schools, many of them run by churches and missions. Primary education has been compulsory in British Guiana since 1876 and the rate of literacy is high, though there is a long-felt need for better technical and scientific education. Right) Children listening to a schools broadcasting programme at a primary school in Georgetown



Interior, but usually in such small quantities as to be economically unworkable. Bauxite is one of the Colony's most important exports and the recently discovered deposits of manganese in the North-West District will be worked on a large scale during the next few years. There are great deposits of iron in the Berbice area, but they have not attracted exploitation since they are considered to be an uneconomic proposition.

Near the Geological Survey is the large Agricultural compound, and the future of the Colony depends more on the success of the work done here than on the problematical discovery of minerals. Beyond the Agricultural compound lies the pride of Georgetown, its Botanical Gardens, whose work is closely linked with the more economic research of the Agricultural Department. The Gardens were laid out between 1879 and 1884 on the site of an abandoned sugar plantation, whose heavy clay formed a badly drained waste-land. As with all cultivation on the coastal belt, an elaborate system of irrigation and drainage had to be constructed before the planting could begin. Today it is difficult to imagine that all has been achieved in a mere seventy-five years, when the trees of English landscaped gardens take two centuries to take the shape imagined for them by those who planted them.

Beyond the new Government town of Campbellville, towards the Sea Wall and the charming suburb of Kitty, the buildings become more thinly spread and there are open spaces of green where, at most times of the day, boys can be seen playing cricket with enthusiasm and skill. In one of the open spaces stands Queen's College, an excellent modern building in wood and glass. It is the first school of the Colony and the social advantage of having been educated there is great, though many of its former pupils have told me that the failing of the school is that it is, or was, biased almost exclusively towards the humane studies and that those who might have benefited from a technological or scientific training found little encouragement. Queen's College is not alone in this; the whole education of the Colony's schools has always been on the same lines, and the result has been the highest general standard of literacy in the West Indies—and a lamentable technological deficiency.

From Queen's College the road turns towards the Sea Wall, a broad parapet rising only a few feet from the road but dropping considerably further, on the other side, to the mud-flats which stretch at low tide as far as

the eye can see. The necessity for this defence is summed up in two sentences by James Rodway in his *History of British Guiana*: "Every acre at present under cultivation," he wrote in 1891, "has been the scene of a struggle with the sea in front and the flood behind. As the result of this arduous labour through two centuries a narrow strip of land along the coast has been rescued from the mangrove swamp, by an elaborate system of dams and dykes." This struggle is today as arduous as it has ever been; a country which lies four feet below sea-level must conceive its agriculture in a totally different manner from countries lying at a more normal level, and there is a great deal to achieve in order to reach the point at which their agriculture begins. Much money is spent each year to maintain the sea defences and the polders which hold back the waters from the "backlands" during the rainy season.

My superficial journey round Georgetown was for the moment at an end; a rum swizzle, a Berbice chair (a chair whose arms project so far that you can put your feet up on them), a little conversation awaited me on the verandah of the hotel where the mid-day sun was unfelt and the air was not unpleasantly hot. The retired Englishwomen were at their bridge, a District Commissioner from an Amerindian reservation discussed a murder in his district with the Assistant Commissioner of Police; the official in charge of dispensing loans in the Self-Help scheme talked over some difficulties with the Development Secretary; the Director of Public Relations for Booker Brothers, the largest concern in the Colony and responsible for 80 per cent of their sugar production, gave me an outline of his company's plans for improving amenities and labour relations on the plantations. Few words are wasted in conversations in British Guiana; there is little gossip or frivolous talk, for such pleasant things seem strangely out of place in a colony where so much is to be done and where all people, of every colour, are concerned to thrash out the myriad questions at every conversation. "Over Guiana, clouds", is the refrain to each verse of a poem by the excellent Georgetown poet, Mr A. J. Seymour. During the last years the clouds have piled heavily, but the will is there to dissolve them. It is a great purpose which demands faith and mutual trust between peoples who have psychological as well as more tangible reasons to distrust each other. It is a purpose, too, which can only be achieved by courageous actions unconcerned with the extremer forms of caution.